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FAIR GAME



KING OF BEASTS

[*Captain Keith Caldwell*

Frontispiece

FAIR GAME

THE OPEN AIR OF FOUR CONTINENTS

By

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"Unforgiving Minutes," etc.

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ABOUT FAUNA
BUT FOR FLORA

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

IN these pages will be found three or four short extracts from articles which I have written in the *Field*. The account of Musia in my final chapter appears by courtesy of the *English Review*. To the editor of each of those journals I tender my thanks for leave to republish. I wish also to express my great gratitude to the Marquis de la Falaise, Mr. Theodore Hubback, Captain Keith Caldwell and Mr. E. Davison for permission to use their splendid photographs.

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN BIG-GAME SHOT

BIG-GAME Shooting is a sport almost without a history. We can go back to the days of Cornwallis Harris and Roualeyn Gordon Cumming and there we are at the very beginning of it. I will not connect it with the bowmen of the Middle Ages for, I think, the connection is not a just one. It gained an increasing hold on popular imagination in the first forty years of Queen Victoria's reign, and the Augustan age of the Big-Game Shooter was from the Queen's first Jubilee till the end of King Edward's reign. Those were the days! How often, how remorselessly have the young men of my generation been reminded of the fact! Days when there were vast tracts of virgin country teeming with game, when there was money and to spare and the leisure to spend it. We who scrape together a few miserable pounds to collect a specimen or two scarcely fit for Rowland Ward in a short two months hardly need to be reminded of it. This was the age of great hunters, men like Pike, Sir John Hewett, Sutherland, Van der Byl, Norman Smith, Sir Alfred Pease, Selous, Stigand, and Sir Bindon Blood, to name only a few, and those selected at random.

With the coming of the motor-car and the aeroplane things began to change. Then the War came

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and changed everything. But an equally real metamorphosis was being brought about by the petrol motor, a change greater even than the extraordinary progressive improvements in modern weapons. For before the War the motor-car was the servant of men; when the War ended it was their master. The motor-car made it easy for the sportsman to reach his game on the plains of India, in African bush, and in the great deserts of Central Asia and Africa. What had taken many weeks of hard trekking to achieve in 1910 could be done in as many days, or even hours, in 1920. This was a source of rather natural irritation to the shikaris of 1910! But far worse than this the habit of shooting from motor-cars became not uncommon, although it was never a regular feature of African life as we are made to believe.

It is a very extraordinary thing that animals which are extremely sensitive to man's approach in quite a number of cases do not mind a motor-car. Thus it became possible to "fill your licence" (horrible expression!) from the back-seat. Transatlantic parties were supposed to motor round Africa slaughtering on a wholesale scale. In the more refined circles they caught lions with fish hooks. (This was afterwards disproved, but not before it had been a nine days' wonder.) Actually, so much publicity was given to these matters that I think cases of this sort are becoming decreasingly rare. Kenya is the happy hunting ground of the plutocratic big-game hunter and the luxury safari, and the Game Warden of Kenya, though gifted with neither omniscience nor

LUXURY SAFARIS

second sight, is very well able to look after these gentry. But, of course, cases do occur. The usual statutory minimum for shooting game is 100 yards from a car. It is, therefore, possible to drop off the running-board till the car is a hundred yards away, and then shoot the lion whose gaze is intently fixed on the retreating number-plate. One can but pray for a lioness somewhere in the offing with the gaze as intently fixed on the number-plate of the intrepid sportsman.

The menace of the petrol motor to-day seems to me to lie more in the opportunity that it offers to the luxury safari. Fly out, pack a sort of Field of the Cloth of Gold into a fleet of lorries, with ice, champagne and a special field bakery, arrange for the hairdresser once a week from Nairobi for the coiffure of your lady friends, and there you are. You have only got to shoot a few specimens with the aid of your white hunter and fly home. It is all faintly nauseating.

Then, of course, as big-game shooting began to spread its ripples, as it was seen that there was money to be made in it, the white hunters and the outfitters began to increase. Who can possibly blame them? They naturally wanted to do business on as large a scale as possible, and the luxury of safaris increased. Let me state here and now that the ordinary Kenya white hunter is a very good sportsman, and the recently formed White Hunters' Association will do much to protect their interests and keep out back-sliders.

They have their little tricks, of course, some of

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them. Which of us has not? Let me tell you of Mr. William P. Smith, of Boston, Mass., and his white hunter, the redoubtable John Brown. It was clear on arrival that Mr. Smith was not a Bisley expert. John Brown accordingly made him try out his rifle in the first camp against an ant-hill. He fired several shots and great satisfaction was expressed at the result. Later on he fired at and, as he thought, missed his beast. "Good shot," cried John Brown, and himself put a bullet into its retreating form, whereat it fell dead. Our transatlantic friend shook his head sadly and said he feared he could lay no claim to the beast, as J. B. had killed it. "Not at all, not at all," replies John Brown, "saw you hit him hard. But, anyhow, bullets can't lie, so we'll open him up." After a brief post-mortem one of the transatlantic bullets is probed out from the region of the heart and honour is satisfied. Our friend does not realize that this is one of a small store that worthy John Brown rescued from the ant-hill! But taken by and large the white hunters are a splendid lot of people.

Still the luxury safari is a thing to be deprecated, but by the luxury safari I do not mean men who make use of the ordinary civilized conveniences of their day, but people who pass beyond the bounds of the reasonable. All the great hunters made use of the new gadgets as they came on the market, windproof clothing, thermos flasks, sparklet syphons and the other small comforts of the camp. That helped to popularize them. The idea that one must live like a palæolithic man if one is going shooting

THE ROOSEVELT EXPEDITION

is ridiculous. Personally, I usually travel fairly "hard" to save money, but I have always noted that the best big-game hunters, if they do a lot of it, make themselves extremely comfortable. Though, if it suddenly becomes necessary, they will travel extremely "light" for very long distances. I must, however, add that out of the many big-game expeditions of which I personally have knowledge, I cannot even remember more than 2 or 3 "luxury safaris." I admit there are some, but by the time these stories have done the round they make fairly good reading. The biggest outfit I ever personally encountered was the Roosevelt expedition to Central Asia, with which I travelled along the Let road in 1924. It was a very large outfit, for the expedition was a very considerable one, but definitely not "luxury."

Actually, I suppose, the motor-car, though it can be abused, is a real blessing to local administrators and game wardens! A 30-cwt. lorry does the work of half a hundred porters, and saves the district officers from a great deal of administrative arrangement. Yet I fear I regard the motor-car with a rather limited favour. I personally can never feel the same about an expedition where there is at least *some* walking, as when one goes right up to one's final camp by car. That is where hill-shooting has such charm. It still takes one as long to get to one shooting ground in the Himalayas as ever it did. And in the Rockies no amount of motor-cars will prevent one having, in all probability, to make a fairly long pack-trail. Half, at least, of the fun in big-game shooting is the

THE MODERN BIG-GAME SHOT

element of “the wild,” and that kind of romance rather evaporates when it comes up on the 9.15. There is all the difference in the world between a desert oryx pursued on camel back, and the same beast sought out on a caterpillar tractor!

But of the aeroplane I think rather differently. It is no substitute for camel or porter, unless one has a private machine and landing-grounds are available. It is merely a substitute for steamer and railway. And I cannot see that three weeks concentrated gin and deck tennis is a necessary prelude to any shooting. Imperial Airways will take one to one's shooting base either in India or Africa—and there are other lines to other parts of the world—in ten days or less, and the saving of time is enormous. Saving of time was not of primary importance before the War, when life was lived at a lower speed than it is to-day, and there were a number of fortunate young men who could devote their life to big-game shooting. To-day to save time is a primary necessity. The aeroplane should therefore be welcomed, for it brings big-game shooting within the reach of many who would have to forgo it. And the more persons taking the right sort of interest in any sport the better. It must always be remembered that no animal, whether it be the red-deer of Exmoor or the Ovis Ammon of the Himalayas, stands a better chance of survival than by being a beast of venery. The sportsman who comes to seek the few licensed heads which it is known that he can safely be allowed to shoot is a strong deterrent to native poaching. Firstly, by actively stopping it, and, secondly, by the fact that

LONDON TO KARAMOJA

if the natives destroy his quarry, he and his money will know their place no more.

Let me give an example of what can be done by the aeroplane. Last year I was working in my office in London at 9.30 a.m. on a Thursday. I caught the morning aeroplane to Africa and arrived in Entebbe on Sunday evening. I was in camp on the borders of Karamoja a day later, and by the next evening had killed a fine buffalo—London seven days. Ten years ago that would have been at best a month's journey, probably six weeks. Forty years ago it would have been a sort of “Doctor Livingstone—I presume” affair.

In considering the changes in big-game shooting one must also consider the enormous improvements which have been made in rifles. This has had, I think, the salutary result of fewer wounded animals, and, I think, it has not been abused unduly in the realm of taking of increasingly long shots. Personally, I am a fanatic on the subject of long shots. Under normal circumstances 150 yards is my absolute limit. I have certainly lost beasts through not taking what were really fair chances at ranges in excess of this, but I have not lost many wounded animals. My .375 Holland which I use for most shooting—other than of the dangerous game, which is usually a matter of a heavy rifle at close-in range—has a flat trajectory up to 200 yards. I judge the target. If it is one I know I can hit, and by the target I mean the vital spot on the animal, then I shoot. If it is not I don't. The actual distance does not worry me so much, because under any circumstances I would not feel

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confident over the range of 150 yards. My own confidence judges the distance accurately: it evaporates at 200 yards or so. And I am *not* a first-class performer though I suppose I have improved with practice.

So far the picture that I have painted is not a particularly enlivening one, but in certain respects I think the modern big-game world is a better place than it was before the War. I think it is generally better realized than it was thirty years ago that the ideal is to shoot a few good specimens and not a lot of indifferent ones. Rules and regulations as regards numbers shot, and as regards species which should not be shot are more definite than was the case in the early part of this century. It is not that the sportsmen of to-day are more "sporting" than those of earlier times, but that the trend of opinion in these matters has generally moved to a somewhat higher plane. It is now fairly generally accepted that the sportsman merely shoots a good head, or two, or even three good heads if game is plentiful and stalking good, but not more.

But he does not shoot more than this unless he sees a better head than the ones he has already slain. He avoids all the rarer species as the plague—white rhinos and so on. Only the other day I saw a well-known sportsman of the past generation confess in print to ten situtunga on a single trip. Would he admit the same to-day? Certainly the publicity that the worst and best sorts of hunters have had has had a most salutary effect, and the institution of Game Laws has been all to the good.

“FILL YOUR LICENCE”

It must not be thought that the limit placed on bags is to be taken as an invitation to “fill the licence.” Quite the reverse. It is more a guide as to comparative rarity, and since one has to draw the limit somewhere figures are given. One might, for instance, legitimately shoot ten kongoni, but I cannot imagine anybody doing it except possibly to feed their porters. It is true that only in a few cases can breaches of the law be prevented, and not many more brought to book, owing to the size of the country where one shoots, but their existence forms a code, and most of us have some sort of respect for the law, even if we come from Chicago. I am not, however, suggesting that the Game Laws are never infringed.

Personally, I have noticed that the “fill your licence” spirit is more rampant in India than in Africa. The number of head that one has shot, here, there or anywhere, is always stressed in the Indian Club bar. It is not fully realized, I think, that to come back from Ladak with a record Ammon to an expenditure of one cartridge is a far greater achievement than to come back with a dozen fair heads. If there is a rare beast—let me take Sind Ibex as a case in point—the spirit seems to be make haste to get one before they are all mopped up. Now that is a generalization, and generalizations are often unfair to individuals, but, nevertheless, I think it is true. I put this down to the presence in India, which there is not in Africa, of a number of quite young army officers, perhaps from regiments with no great knowledge of shikar, who are very keen

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and who suffer in a greater or lesser degree from the blood lust that most of us experienced at one time or another. One has a great deal of sympathy with them. Unfortunately, some of them are Peter Pans who never grow up, and seem to go on like this into the sere and yellow.

It is very difficult in these days to ply one's trade as a big-game shot. Lack of time, lack of money, the encroaching of civilization into game areas, diminishing game, sleeping sickness areas, even the competition of other sportsmen all tell their tale. But I, personally, do not admit that the British Big-Game Shot that has grown up since the War is a worse sportsman than his predecessor of other generations. He has less time and money to spare and to this extent he is more of a *rara avis*, but I have never been able to join the decadence of modern youth movement, and only hope I shall be of the same frame of mind twenty and thirty and forty years on. He is a good sportsman according to the generally accepted standards of his day, just as his predecessors of fifty and a hundred years ago were in theirs. And the standards of to-day are undoubtedly better ones.

Perhaps, before we leave this topic, we might consider the most important thing from the point of view of international Big-Game Shooting of our lifetime—the London Conference on the protection of the Fauna and Flora of Africa of 1933.

This Conference did some useful work, but it was not without its own humours, and a certain amount of its own pathos. It was held in the venerable and sacrosanct purlieus of the House of Lords. Long

FAUNAL CONFERENCE

double tables faced by a formidable row of leather-backed chairs and decorated by equidistant tumblers of stale water awaited the delegates. Beyond a heavy railing there was a pen for the Press. It was decidedly faunal. It is no exaggeration to say that it would have been hard to collect together a more representative body of nature lovers. There can have been few conferences at which the vast majority of the delegates were more anxious to reach agreement, and in which they were actuated by higher motives. There were here and there a few ornamentals, but as a general rule one could be sure that they all knew their stuff, as the saying is. Lord Onslow, with his long experience as President of the Fauna Society and Chairman of Committees in the House of Lords, was an obvious choice as chairman. He proved both persuasive and conciliatory ; he was quite right to be both, though as things turned out, perhaps a stronger line would have paid. Yet it might have wrecked all chance of any agreement at all. No, one must support Lord Onslow to the full.

The Conference started with an orgy of noble sentiments, the more noticeable because the delegates became surprisingly good news value. "They have come to save Big Game," ran the headlines in the evening papers, in lieu of a trunk mystery (No. 1, 2 or 3) or a "good" divorce. Then the Conference got down to business. Straightaway the other countries looked to us for a lead as the greatest colonizing power and the nation that set the fashion to all hunters, and the chairman had a cut-and-dried draft convention prepared by the United Kingdom dele-

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gation, which was put forward as a basis of discussion. This was excellent but, unfortunately, few of the delegates gave the impression of being plenipotentiaries. Thus what would have been a first-class convention was whittled down and whittled down owing to local reservations.

In the case of our own Crown Colonies, the Colonial Office could, of course, have insisted. But the "leave-it-to-the-man-on-the-spot" principle reigns—and rightly reigns—in the Colonial Office, and alas! in seven cases out of ten the man on the spot is not a preservationist. I hate saying this, but I can only state what has been the result of my observations in different parts of the world. Thus all would agree that it was desirable to limit such and such a malpractice, with a burst of noble sentiment. They then, in too many cases, hedged it round with native rights and tribal customs, which could not be interfered with. I do not wish to be unfair to officials who have spent much of the best part of their lives labouring for their natives. But I must point out that native customs cannot be inviolable for ever. Cannibalism and suttee were native customs at one time.

The first question was one of National Parks. Everybody agreed on their desirability. The Convention was set fair to make every separate colony set up a national park within its boundaries. Then the French, for some reason which I cannot explain, hit on the idea of having "strict nature reserves" as well. This seemed to me to be drawing a white elephant across the trail. There are already reserves

RESERVES OR NATIONAL PARKS

in every part of Africa, I think, except Liberia, where the only reserve is for officials of the League of Nations. A reserve can be made by a stroke of the pen and can be washed out by a stroke of the pen. A national park is dedicated to wild life in perpetuity, and is not easily eradicated. A strict nature reserve is what Lord Palmerston would have called a Regular Mongrel Affair. It also seemed to me an admirable loophole for those who were jibbing at a national park. But I hasten to add that I do not think this was the intention of the French. Thus every country finally became pledged to explore making a strict nature reserve *or* a national park. And that does not give the first requisite—permanence.

A number of animals were scheduled for protection (much discussion centring round an antelope which was found to have been extinct for fifty years), and this list was a wise one. But it remains, as of course the delegates knew, to put these fine principles into practice. The Giant Sable or White Rhino have only a middling sense of security from pious declarations. But perhaps the most important part of the Conference dealt with the illicit sale of “found” ivory and rhino horn. By stopping this one stops the bugbear of all Preservationists—“killing for profit.” Now action is of no use in the case of ivory, unless it is universal. For one may poach in Kenya and sell in Italian Somaliland. But if in every country it is impossible to buy or sell, export or import ivory without a Government licence to say that it was honestly come by, then the poacher is left holding the baby. But *everybody* must co-operate.

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Again, in many countries there is a reward for "found" ivory. The native brings it in and goes fifty-fifty with the Government. He says he got it off a dead elephant, which is, of course, true. He probably fails to add that he killed the elephant! It is a pleasant little source of income to the Government, and the most fertile source of poaching. Some there were who were not willing to give up this source of income. But if the native gets nothing for "finding" ivory and cannot sell it, then he follows, for lack of alternative, the straight and narrow path. The Conference failed to pass a resolution abolishing rewards for "found" ivory. This was a great mistake, but it was no fault of our delegation.

It was further proposed that all "found" ivory should belong to Government. This was an important point, though deprived of some of its force by the fact that rewards would be paid to the finder. The question was debated till a very late hour by a Conference anxious to come to agreement and conclude its labours. At about midnight when most of the principal members of the delegations had gone away, the Italians in all sweet reasonableness proposed to add that they agreed with this "in principle." This was accepted without demur or discussion, but it wrecked the clause, for acceptance "in principle" left a very large loophole indeed. Actually ivory poaching cannot be stopped except by strict abolition of rewards for "found" ivory and the prevention of sale except by licence.

As the result of stringent efforts on all sides, a complete agreement was reached on a large number

RATIFICATION

of important points. For this, as other things, Lord Onslow certainly deserves to be congratulated. Unfortunately the signatories reserved the right to make certain reservations on ratification. This from the point of view of game was very unfortunate. Reservations should have been made at the time. The conference was one of experts who were in a position to give chapter and verse. In the atmosphere of the Conference, where the most high-minded sentiments towards wild life were in vogue, the reservations would, I feel, be different to those which will have been hammered out with unsympathetic Permanent Under Secretaries, hedged in by "pledges," and the views of a chief susceptible to votes and unbalanced budgets. I understand several of the British colonies have made these reservations, but till the treaty becomes operative we are not to know what they are.

The treaty becomes operative when four nations have ratified it. As I write Great Britain, Belgium, South Africa and Egypt have done so, and France is about to do so. The treaty therefore came into force on January 14, 1936. That is something. The Convention of 1900 was never ratified at all. We have to thank Lord Onslow and Baron Cartier de Marchienne, the Belgian Ambassador, for the ratification of this treaty. It has left, as I have tried to point out, many loopholes, and it remained and remains to be seen whether it would be fulfilled in the spirit; for the letter can be most widely interpreted. The Fauna Society feel that the treaty may well be honourably observed, and the opinion of Mr. Hobley, their energetic and well-informed secretary, is certainly

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worth a lot. Personally, as far as I can judge, things are going on much as they always were. The National Parks of the Belgian Congo and North America remain models of what such Parks should be. In Kenya, Game Preservation, despite the difficulties with rhino and ivory horn, remains good. Elsewhere, I see no particular urging to definite action within the terms of the Conference's resounding eloquence, but, then, I may be wrong. And, after all, this Conference did, at least, reach agreement, and did, at least, sign and, in some cases, ratify an agreement.

CHAPTER II

ELEPHANT CONTROL

IN the previous chapter I wrote of the broader principles of preservation : in this one I will consider its most criticized aspect—that of elephant control. Now a good deal has been written about this subject in the last few years, but it must have been either very badly written or left altogether unread, if one is to judge from the sort of comments that one hears on the subject. Put as shortly as possible it means this. *Pax Britannica* has brought it about that, since approximately the beginning of this century, law and order has spread over a great part of Africa, where, previously, nothing was there but darkness on the face of the waters. With the coming of the white man civilization, or, at least, cultivation, extended ; infant mortality decreased enormously ; health generally improved ; while certain unpleasant endemic diseases diminished in an inverse ratio ; and the population increased and multiplied.

Meanwhile, the Government were keeping an increasingly watchful eye on shooting. Licences were introduced, a pleasing source of revenue, poaching diminished, and the number of elephants to be shot on a licence was very much reduced. Although the professional ivory hunters were able to carry on till

ELEPHANT CONTROL

1914, their activities were becoming increasingly restricted. Then came the War, and elephant shooting was much curtailed. Now, it has been reckoned that a cow elephant reaches maturity at about 25 years of age, and that she calves once in every $2\frac{1}{2}$ years to a total exceeding ten calves.

Now, cows definitely exceed bulls, though it is hard to say in quite what proportion. If we say it is two to one it should not be an over-estimate. In a herd of 3,000 elephants, therefore, there would be 2,000 cows. These cows will probably live to be about 90. Therefore, for something over a quarter of their lives they will be breeding. That gives us 500 breeding elephants producing a cow each in $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, or some 200 elephants a year. In other words, there will be, approximately, a 6 per cent. increase every year.

From this we deduce that in the four years of the War there was, at least, a 25 per cent. increase in the elephant herds, and, except where Government permission was obtained—and in point of fact it was of necessity quite freely given—only two elephants per licence could be killed. It will, therefore, be seen that the herds would be unwieldy in any case, but, in this particular case, unwieldiness was magnified by the steady rise in the population in many parts of British Africa.

Something had to be done, and certain new factors influenced that something. Public opinion was becoming increasingly susceptible. In the old days one might disappear into darkest Africa and come back with thousands of pounds' worth of ivory. Exeter



THE CLASSIC TRIEZE: ELEPHANTS ON THE MOVE IN INDO-CHINA

Marquis de la Falaise

GOVERNMENT KILLING

Hall might cackle a bit, but the individual in question could go on his way rejoicing. To-day, thanks to a finer appreciation of what we owe to wild life on the part of big-game shots, to the great interest in animals brought about largely by photographers and cinema photography, and to the moderating influence of the new game departments themselves, such action would be generally condemned ; nor would it be easy to conceal, for though Africa is far away, the antennæ of the Press would sooner or later lay hold on it. Elephants are News.

Therefore, as European sportsmen were prevented by law from doing anything about it, and as it was perfectly obviously undesirable to turn natives on to the business, as that would have started a thriving trade in illicit ivory and filled Africa with wounded elephants, Government killing became almost inevitable. It started at first by giving certain well-known and reliable shots permission to shoot so many elephants, and they probably went fifty-fifty with the Government in the sale of ivory. This had one great advantage in that it ensured the elephants were well and truly killed, but against this must be weighed a fact that became the more apparent as these schemes continued. The hunters chosen were experts ; they were also accustomed to go for the big bulls, and as this was the way they obtained their remuneration it is neither surprising nor unreasonable. They would descend with stealth and without hurry or commotion on a herd, take their toll and pass on to another. The herd would think it rather a pity that Grand-papa and old Uncle Hannibal should be lost to them,

ELEPHANT CONTROL

but really they were getting a bit bored with that story of how he outwitted Jim Sutherland way back in '05, and they returned to raid the same *shamba* (plantation) a fortnight later.

Now, that was not what was wanted at all. What was wanted was that the herd should be taught a *real* lesson, something that would prevent them worrying that locality for years and years. The elephant is a very intelligent animal, and he will take a hint, but it has to be a fairly broad one. It became realized that what was required was to descend on the herd and inflict the heaviest possible casualties. Under these circumstances shooting became quantitative and not qualitative. A further consideration complicated matters, though not till several years after control had started. Ivory which had been £1 or so per pound sunk to about 6s. (the price paid in Africa) at its lowest. Therefore, the semi-professional gradually faded out, or would have faded out, and something else had to fill his place.

A special department was, therefore, called into being in certain dependencies, consisting of a native staff to deal with elephant control under European direction. It was, I think, under the auspices of Captain Keith Caldwell that the scheme was initiated in Uganda, but it has been widely practised also in Tanganyika, and also in Kenya and Northern Rhodesia, as occasion demands. The Uganda scheme for the last ten years has been in the hands of Captain C. R. S. Pitman. The white staff of Rangers are responsible for initiating control, deciding when and where shooting is to take place, and on what scale. The Ranger

TRAINING GAME GUARDS

naturally does a good deal of shooting and leads important operations, but his main duties are to train the native staff.

Shooting elephants is a very highly specialized business, and it is one in which confidence in oneself and one's weapons is the first essential. The native who starts badly will never make an elephant shot. But, if he is well grounded, he will be able to do a great deal to protect native life and cultivation. Every game guard has his own area, and he must be prepared as and when necessary to go out and drive off confirmed shamba raiders, or deal with particular elephants who may be causing trouble. This training is not carried out without some trouble. Game guards are human, with human frailties. Here is a pregnant passage from Captain C. R. S. Pitman's last annual report.

Captain Salmon explaining a decline in the number of elephants killed in Bunyoro expressively records : "The custom of allowing the Bunyoro Guards to shoot from trees has, undoubtedly, resulted in many Bunyoro elephants' sterns being bullet-battered to such an extent that they have permanently removed themselves over the Kafue and settled in Buganda." The Game Ranger has insisted on his staff doing their shooting from the ground, which has brought some relief to the elephants, and sorrow and resignation on the part of some of the older guards.

Comment is surely unnecessary.

The life of a game guard, especially a senior one, is not an easy one in a country where a great deal of poaching and traffic in illicit ivory is going on, and where the Game Staff have to employ their own

ELEPHANT CONTROL

C.I.D. Here are two extracts from Captain Ritchies' last Game Report from Kenya, which are always such good reading, and which I cannot refrain from giving in this respect.

The numbers of people involved (in rhino poaching) do not constitute the crux, or even the major part, of the problem. The trouble is the rapidity with which the stuff changes hands. It has often occurred to me that our perpetual efforts to catch participants in the traffic is very like a game of "Hunt the Slipper." In that innocent pastime it doesn't help us that we know every member of the seated circle, and know that each one in turn will handle the slipper itself. Uncle Percy has it now, but, as we pounce, it goes to Aunt Mary, who slips it to Clarence, who passes it to his girl friend, and so it races round——

And here is another even more significant passage on quite another note.

In October, 1934, the Department suffered a terrible loss in the sudden death of the head scout of the coast —Diwan bin Ahmed. Diwan was probably the most efficient servant this department has ever had, and I have little hope that we shall find him a worthy successor. Descended from the Sultans of Pate, Diwan was not only a very great and brilliant gentleman, but also, perhaps surprisingly, a very energetic and enthusiastic one. For years he had carried his life in his hand, working as he did in communities, savage or less so, where the arts of the poisoner are studied and held in esteem. It was, perhaps, his personality that saved him, and his intelligence and the Mercy of Providence. His sudden death from an obscure diphtheria-like affection was a bitter blow to me, personally, and to Mr. McArthur, who had worked with him, or through him, for so many years.

FALLIBLE STATISTICS

To revert to our main theme. We may, I think, conclude that control has met with a measure of success in the sphere in which it was hoped that it would be of service. Firstly, the elephants are now being expeditiously destroyed by experts ; secondly, they are destroyed regardless of their value as ivory, but in consideration of the needs of the native cultivation ; thirdly, they are killed in sufficient numbers as to make them "take the hint," and leave the neighbourhood where they are not wanted for a locality where they can do no harm. And, fourthly, the killing of elephants is considered *as a whole*. Will a drive at A send the raiders to B? Should all control cease at C? And has the elephant population at D not increased so alarmingly that unless action is taken they will overflow into E?

I think it is undoubtedly true to say that the operations conducted so far have tended to keep the elephants away from the places where they were not wanted and restrict them to localities suitable to them. But I also think that there may have been a tendency in official reports to ignore the fact that, unless one is careful, decrease of pressure in one spot may tend to increase pressure elsewhere. There is also a tendency to calculate elephant population more closely than I think it possible to do, especially as in particular localities it may be shifting. In making this statement it is only fair to add that I am not an expert, and those who compute these figures are.

It may be of interest here to insert a few elephant control statistics. In Kenya, where there is no need for a control scheme proper, the sum obtained from

ELEPHANT CONTROL

the sale of ivory in 1932 was £8,818, in 1933 was £7,261 and in 1934 was £9,709. This represents 22,582, 31,156 and 28,931 lbs. of ivory and some rhino horn, and it is probable, though the figures are not given, that it represents over 1,000 elephants. The average weight, however, of Kenya elephants is a fairly high one, and much of this ivory is "found" or may have been stored.

The Kenya figures are interesting as showing how considerable a profit accrues to game departments from ivory, though the majority of the Kenya revenue comes from "found" and "confiscated" ivory. The Uganda figures are for a permanent control scheme. Here they are for ten years, showing the number of elephants shot, and the revenue in that period, a small proportion of which must be attributed to rhino horn.

Year.	No. of Elephants controlled.	No. of Elephants found.	Revenue from sale of Ivory.	Elephants shot by Licence-Holders.
1925	587	271	£20,386	32
1926	650	144	£6,801	175
1927	604	168	£21,445	169
1928	657	221	£11,314	227
1929	1,033	185	£16,159	221
1930	892	142	£11,628	97
1931	1,211	131	£15,266	105
1932	1,210	176	£12,672	143
1933	1,380	196	£10,394	75
1934	1,603	293	£11,548	100

In Tanganyika in the year 1932, approximately 600 elephants were killed by the Control Staff, and 345 elephants were found. £22,444 was made from sale of ivory. I have not the figures for the subsequent

KILLING FOR PROFIT

years, but it may be taken that there was no startling divergence from this amount.

Captain Pitman, in his recent report on the possibilities of elephant control in Northern Rhodesia, places the necessary wastage in that colony, under the scheme he outlined, as 600 elephants per year, and the annual income to Government as £4,800.

Now, so far, I have given my unqualified support to elephant control because I think that taken by and large it has had the effect of keeping elephants away from places where they are not wanted, and permitting them to go about their lawful occasions in places where they can thrive. Further, the very fact that the wholesale killing takes place in definite doses is probably the best policy for the elephants themselves, and will preserve them better than anything else, paradoxical though this may seem. And, finally, the elephants are killed by experts.

But I grant that I fully understand these wholesale killings must inspire keen preservationists with grave doubt, as they did me till quite recently. And here I must strike a warning note.

There seems to me a danger that elephant control will be looked on increasingly as a source of revenue. It will be put forward by game departments as a justification for their existence. Ultimately, the revenue side of the question may oust the control side and more elephants may be shot than is strictly necessary. Now "killing for profit"—to use Captain Keith Caldwell's admirable phrase—is the great bugbear of all preservationists, and it is certainly no less a bugbear when it is done by the State. One

ELEPHANT CONTROL

can only hope that my prophecy will not be fulfilled, but I must confess I have noticed a dangerous tendency to emphasize the financial side of control. It must be kept in mind that when, and if, the herds are restricted in reasonable numbers to areas suitable to them, then control will cease to be anything but a very minor source of income.

I myself was fortunate enough to go out to Uganda last year and see something of elephant control in the hands of the most distinguished of practising elephant shots, Captain Samaki Salmon. Samaki is not, perhaps, quite the artist that Karamoja Bell was, but there is no man, living or dead, who has had his unique opportunities for studying and shooting elephants. It is, of course, often urged that what he does is mere butchery. It is the same sort of argument as is urged against punt-gunning, though actually there is no difference to shooting twenty duck in one shot, or one duck in twenty shots. They are killed just the same. I know he is not a butcher. I have heard him say, "It takes more than a hundred years to build a big bull elephant, and it is no pleasure to me to knock it down in five seconds."

I well remember our first day after elephant together. It was not a particularly interesting day, nor one that was outstanding in any way, but it was my first day following in the steps of the master, and, therefore, I am not likely to forget it. Later, I was to see him under other and more exciting circumstances, but this was the first occasion, and it left a great impression on my mind.

PRIEST AND PILGRIMAGE

The whole business is so calm and deliberate. In front walks Samaki. To the outward eye he is moving with the slow deliberate pace of the Trooping of the Colour. To the attendant acolyte it seems like March, 1918. The spoor becomes fresh ; he surveys it appreciatively ; the attendant gun-bearers jostle forward ; Samaki's gun-bearers are all the genuine vintage article. From his pocket he produces a moribund sock ; he shakes out of it ashes to heaven. The wind puffs them back into our faces. He passes on shaking, shaking at his sock. But the attitude is that of no ordinary sock-shaker. He is a priest with his censer, our procession a pilgrimage. He points. Three enormous figures loom up before us, perhaps a hundred yards away. You and I, gentle reader, alone of the party are feeling excited. To Samaki and his braves these immature bulls can be dismissed with a gesture from all human thought, and, anyhow, they begin work at fifteen yards or so. The bulls feed on, while we pursue. The bush becomes thicker. Suddenly, the whole neighbourhood seems to be alive with elephant ; pulling at the bushes, standing in profound contemplation, cosening their young. "Cows," says Samaki. A trunk goes up. Samaki takes his gun. The faithful Musia sidles up to me with mine. Ears prick and the herd swings round to come past in procession, as perfect a picture as you can well imagine. Perhaps twenty cows and their young ; one behind the other at the regulation amble. It is like a Greek frieze. We pass on. More sock-shaking. The small bulls again. We circle gingerly

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round them. One of them has our wind. He advances towards us with much more of enquiry than menace. "Plug him one if he charges," says Samaki. I assume a Horatius Cockles attitude. The bulls make off. Farther on up the valley there are more elephant on the move. This time the bulls carry heavy ivory. Two we see of, perhaps, 60 lbs., and we move round them for closer inspection. We approach two colossal backsides, nearer and nearer. Is Samaki going to salt his tail, I wonder. The backsides give a heave and disappear behind the bush. We follow; for half a mile we push through the scrub; always they are just in front of us. Then, for a moment, we lose them. And an excited Acholi rushes up to say that the biggest elephant in the world is just round the corner. (Half the tribe of Acholi is keeping just out of cursing range for the meat that lies in the footsteps of Samaki.) It proves to be one of the young bulls again. Samaki gives the Acholi some interesting genealogical data, and the hunt, for the moment, pauses. It was at this juncture I remember that Mahomed Effendi, a delightful old friend of Samaki's K.A.R. days, rushed forward to complain that the baser part of our entourage were calling him "Mahomed," without suffix, an insult hardly to be supported! This, for a matter of fact, ended that particular hunt, but I record it in the exact words that I described it in that night in my diary, without embellishment or subtraction, because the whole hunt was an object-lesson to me in calm, deliberate, unflurried, scientific hunting. We had been right into a herd of, perhaps, sixty elephants,

THE BUNYORO DRIVE

and had surveyed them all without a tremor and without, incidentally, a shot. Most of us would have discharged our piece at the first biggish bull.

But that was not control proper. That was the pursuit of my licence bull. Later on we went down into Baruli, where the year before the elephants had become quite unmanageable, and Samaki had done his famous drive. I confess that I had heard of this drive with misgivings, for 400 seemed a very large bag of elephants indeed. We passed right through the country where this drive took place. It was a most interesting experience. To the east of the Karfue, which runs north and south, there is a long and fairly newly-constructed road running through Bunyoro, along which there is an increasing area of cultivation. Away to the west of the river there is a very large tract which never has been opened up and probably never will be, a vast area of swamp, an ideal country for elephants: there are probably several thousands there. But in the early parts of 1935, the elephants had been causing so much trouble that it was determined to drive them right out of Bunyoro into this swamp area and with such a lesson as would teach them never to come back. It was also imperative to reduce their numbers as these elephants had multiplied beyond all proportions.

Accordingly, Samaki Salmon carried out the greatest elephant drive of all time.

I will quote the actual official report:

The outstanding feature of elephant control during the year has been the remarkable reduction of elephant num-

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bers in North Mengo effected under the direction of Captain Salmon. Herds which were known to be large had been permitted to breed unchecked for ten years, and although damage to cultivation in the settled south had not assumed extensive proportions, it was, nevertheless, serious and no longer tolerable. For the elephants in this area a District Officer has coined a new descriptive term —“acres” instead of “hundreds”!

The actual intensive operations described in detail later were preceded by a feat of expert shooting and human endurance on the part of Captain Salmon never before equalled in the annals of elephant hunting, and which are likely to remain unique.

As this Ranger had not even a gun-bearer who could finish off a wounded elephant, all shooting in the course of his preliminary investigation had to be performed personally. In three consecutive days, seventy elephants were killed (sixty-six actually on a count of tails, but others were subsequently found dead), and anyone conversant with big-game shooting and high-velocity heavy rifles will understand what this means in terms of headache, battered shoulder, blistered hands and general exhaustion.

The summary of his achievements on five consecutive days is worth recording :

Date.			Walking miles.	Driving lorry miles.	Elephants killed.
15th July	.	.	20	16	Nil
16th July	.	.	10	75	13
17th July	.	.	15	19	22
18th July	.	.	15	19	31
19th July	.	.	Nil	156	Nil
<hr/>			<hr/>		
Totals	.	.	<u>60</u>	<u>285</u>	<u>66</u>

Captain Salmon between 13th and 18th July carried out a preliminary reconnaissance of conditions in the Buruli—North Bulemezi area—in the course of which, as previously

A PLANNED OPERATION

mentioned, on three consecutive days he destroyed single-handed a total of seventy elephants just north of a line from Wabusana to Wakyato, i.e., within forty miles of Kampala.

Owing to a general shortage of food and the difficulty of obtaining and feeding carriers, organized operations in order to effect an appreciable reduction amongst these herds as well as to drive them into the uninhabited north, had to be postponed till the end of August.

The carefully-planned operation, which lasted about four weeks, was executed so skilfully and speedily that the elephants had scarcely begun to realize what was happening before the drastic punishment ceased, and in the absence of undue harassing of the herds no abnormal damage to cultivation resulted.

Captain Salmon and his staff received the well-deserved thanks of the Provincial Administration and the Native Government, as well as official congratulations on the excellence of their performance.

Damage to crops for the time being at any rate has been very materially reduced, and it depends on how the situation develops what action, if any, will be necessary next year. That this region is still very much overstocked is unquestionable.

Appended is Captain Salmon's report on his activities :

"Operations for reduction of numbers of Buganda elephants were continued during August-September. I had one Mubende and two Northern Province Guards working in the area bounded by the Mayanja, Kafu and Lugogo rivers, while I dealt with everything between the Lugogo and Sezibwa rivers. Under very heavy pressure a few elephants made half-hearted attempts to go south of the Wakyato-Luwero-Wabusana line, but they all went well north again before the end of September brought the campaign to a close.

"During the period 20th August to 30th September,

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403 elephants were killed in the areas outlined above, of which a total of eighteen went to various King's African Rifles' officers and licence-holders who accompanied me at odd times. As you know, I killed seventy elephants in this area during July, so that a grand total of 473 is definitely accounted for, all but sixteen actually killed outright within this area, the sixteen head being animals followed across the Mayanja and killed in Singo. Killing elephants at this rate necessitates the taking of every opportunity which presents itself and inevitably leads to considerable wounding and temporary loss of animals which should be recovered subsequently. The numbers wounded were naturally added to quite considerably by both myself and the qualified Guards having recruits and trainees with us all the time, and I shall not be surprised if the total wastage accounted for exceeds five hundred head.

"During the August-September period, the 403 elephants were accounted for as follows :

Joseph Kidza and Zakaliya	147
Mahomed and two Eastern Province trainees	50
Darufu and two Eastern Province trainees	28
Captain Salmon and recruit Maulice	160
King's African Rifles' officers and three licence-holders accompanying Captain Salmon	18
	—
	<u>403"</u>

Now these figures are appalling to the preservationist, but Salmon has assured me that he thinks they were justified, and that viewed over a period of a few years they probably mean that fewer elephants will be shot. Certainly, I can vouch for the results. As we passed from village to village we were received with protestations alike of gratitude and affection. No elephants had been back for over

PAX SALMONICA

six months, where, previously, the shambas had been raided almost nightly. *Pax Salmonica* had indeed been proclaimed. This was no put-up show to impress the visitor; it was clear enough that that drive had done its work.

We went on for some distance to the north and here, again, we had news of a raiding herd. We said we would return the following morning. When we got to the spot we had an object lesson in what damage a herd of elephants can do. There had been another raid that night and we were greeted with the lamentations of a dozen or so miserable Africans. We were taken to their little patch of cultivation—the *ruris opes parvæ*: about forty elephants had been making merry there throughout the night. It was wiped out. To you and I, sitting in the warmth and security of our English fireside, that does not mean very much. What a bore for them, we think, and wonder if it's time to dress for dinner. To those unfortunate Africans it represented six months' income and food. I yield to no man as a preservationist, but that fact must not be lost sight of.

We set off in pursuit. It was arranged that Samaki was to do the shooting, Mrs. Samaki and I following up behind to join in as and how we could. I asked him what he was going to do. "Kill six or eight," he said; "not more." Now the art in control shooting, if one wishes to shoot several elephants, is to "stall" them, an art of which Samaki is the supreme prophet. Stalling entails shooting the leaders or outside elephants, so that the remainder of the herd panic and crowd in together in a jumble,

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which gives one, say, a minute in which to do one's shooting.

We set off in pursuit at the same swinging pace as before. Samaki first, Mrs. Samaki and I, his three gun-bearers—he shoots on these occasions with two double barrels and a magazine—and then a gun-bearer each for Mrs. Samaki and myself. Samaki, by his arrangement of rifles, ensures that he always has a gun to his hand, as while he is emptying the magazine the two double barrels are being re-loaded. We walked a good five miles per hour for, perhaps, an hour and a half. I was beginning to feel pleasantly exerted. We came on fresh droppings. The chase was getting close. There was a general atmosphere of something going to happen ; junior counsel were rustling their papers, the eminent silk was about to make his great effort. Three hundred yards farther on Samaki pointed. There, in a gap in the trees, perhaps fifty yards in front, was a bull elephant, slowly nodding his head, the picture of calm and dignified contemplation. The wind, tested every thirty seconds or so, was with us, and we advanced to within thirty yards of him. It seemed impossible that he should not see us. Samaki pointed at him. I read his gesture to mean "will you shoot him ?" Actually what Samaki meant was "you take the near one : I've got the leaders covered beyond." He raised his rifle, fired two shots, and before one hardly knew what had happened, he had changed to the second rifle, thrown it up like a shot-gun, and the giant in front of us suddenly buckled up, back legs first, and came crashing down. It was as if one was

UNHURRIED SHOOTING

standing by the Queen Anne statue and the pillars of St. Paul's were knocked away to let the dome slowly but deliberately down to the ground. Then I saw beyond what Samaki had spotted before—I was much too occupied with the monster at hand—a herd of, perhaps, forty elephants beyond. Samaki fired again and the other outside leader dropped, and then suddenly there took place the most perfect stall imaginary. The whole herd, moyed by some unknown impulse, seemed to close in on the centre, and there in front of us was a seething heaving mass of packed elephant sterns, all struggling to break away and yet only wedging themselves the tighter by the effort.

Samaki ran round to a flank. He fired again and again, perhaps ten or twelve shots, perhaps less; I didn't count. He gave each two as a poisoned hand prevented his usual accuracy. He was, of course, only using the brain-shot. That drops the elephant dead. The heart-shot is just as effective, but it means that the animal probably goes about two hundred yards before he drops, and where one wants to shoot several elephants this means that he stampedes the herd with him. Meanwhile, all around, elephants seemed to be dropping from the sky. They are so enormous looming above you at that point-blank range. All the time one is looking *up*. Samaki was shooting with precision—all his elephants were dead; shot through the brain; there were three or four down, I think, and I still watched the extraordinary coolness and unflurried aim of the great man, lost in wonder, love and praise.

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Then it occurred to me to bestir myself and do a little shooting on my own. I ran round to the opposite flank. An elephant was moving off through the trees about ten yards away. I fired both barrels, the brain-shot. He collapsed. I turned for my temporary gun-bearer, Musia being with Samaki for this occasion. He was nowhere to be seen. I ran back, found him, seized my magazine rifle, and re-entered the fray. I fired three shots before the next elephant fell, and then he only went down stunned, front legs first and not back legs. Mrs. Samaki, whom I had just seen out of the corner of my eye putting down an elephant, came up and despatched it with a point-blank shot through the back of the neck.

By now the herd had broken and scattered. We ran on for fifty yards, but Samaki did not wish to shoot more. He had five down, and Mrs. Samaki and I had two or three. The bustle and crunching and stamping and general tumult had died down, and we were left amid the great silence.

“Let’s go back and see if any were only stunned,” said Samaki. One old gentleman was. He was swaying on his feet; very “wonky.” “You take him,” said Samaki; “it will be practice in the brain-shot.”

My first barrel did not reach the vital spot, but, to my second, he collapsed instantly. There were eight dead elephants: all bulls of average weight of, say, 30 lbs. Had Samaki been really fit, and not given every elephant two shots to ensure there were no wounded, he could, if he had wanted, have slain twice that number. As it was, he had shot half a

EFFECTIVE RESULTS

dozen in, perhaps, two minutes. It is rarely that a demonstration can have worked so well—the raided shamba, the stalling, the unhurried accurate shooting. I was, and still am, deeply impressed.

There is an aftermath to that story. The herd crossed the main road and travelled twenty miles that night. Two days later we were at a village forty miles away, and that same herd had raided the village, doing considerable damage, the night before. The next day it crossed the Karfue into the proper elephant territory, and six months later I heard that it was still there. So, our piece of control was a really effective one, and probably the kindest thing for that herd in the long run.

CHAPTER III

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

WE have considered some of the factors in preservation, and so it might be pertinent also to consider just what is meant by the term "Big-Game Shooting," which is somewhat loosely applied, as in all conscience is the word "stalking." The Highland stalker is not a Big-Game Shot in the accepted sense of the term, and yet if one has stalked and slain—say—the same red deer in New Zealand, one becomes a big-game shot: and when one has done it twice one is eligible for membership of the Shikar Club! Yet two trips to Tomiebeg would ill support an application for membership. But big game obviously does not postulate merely "dangerous game," and one must, therefore, start with a mouse-deer and work upwards. As to stalking, does it infer merely the open approach on the open hill—or any approach other than beating? Can one stalk one's elephant as one's roe deer? Or if not what is that nervous perambulation with the ash bag called? A "stalk," my dictionary tells me, is "to approach under cover of a screen or by stealth, for the purpose of killing, as of game." Nothing here about open hillsides: indeed, the "screen" may be one of impenetrable jungle. Yet, I stick to my own mental



1742 *J. Non*

S T I L L - H U N T I N G

reservation about a stalk. A stalk is "an open covenant openly arrived at," as our statesmen so often, so unctuously inform us. I would definitely not rule out the pursuit of an animal like a roan or an eland that lives in scrub or bush country in which one's field of vision may be anything from five to five hundred yards. But, to me, the term stalking means the high hills, and the telescope, and the approach over practically open country, as one knows it in a Scottish forest and as it is seen at its best in the Rockies, the Himalayas and, perhaps, most enviable of all, in Central Asia.

Still-hunting—most expressive of phrases—postulates the silent approach through woods or dense country. I have never cared for still-hunting as I have cared for stalking proper, but then I have never cared for anything as I care for stalking. Still-hunting covers most of the deer tribe, most of the animals now left in the Indian plains, and a great many African species—notably the Bongo, still one of the great prizes of the big-game world. It is a chuck-and-chance-it method in a great many cases, and one never knows what may turn up: hence, it has meant a great deal of undeserved luck. That, perhaps, is an unfair thing to say as luck has always and must always play a very important and essential part in big-game shooting. But at its best still-hunting calls for a knowledge of woodcraft and more knowledge of the habits of the quarry than any other form of shooting. It is a joy to watch a stalker in a Scottish forest; but it is a revelation to watch one of the half-dozen really finished roe stalkers working a big woodland.

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Still-hunting requires a knowledge that is found at its highest in very simple folk who have devoted their whole lives to woodcraft and nothing else: for education makes a better citizen, but it inevitably destroys something of the single-minded finish of the craftsman. I am thinking now in particular of a Gond tracker I had once in the C.P.: I cannot remember his name and I doubt even if I ever knew it. But what I do recall is the uncanny intent with which he would follow a track, and that element of stealth and swiftness and cunning which hung about his progress.

Finally, there is the whole question of dangerous game. Except in the case of beating for lion or tiger, or of the illustrious few who shoot from the back of an elephant, I suppose that this has a right to be called still-hunting. Yet nobody regards it as such. The pursuit of any of those seven animals which will on occasion turn and rend you, lion, tiger, elephant, rhino, buffalo, bear and bison, can, I think, be classed as a separate form of hunting, nor is this the time or place to distinguish between the merits of shooting a tiger from a howdah and following it wounded through high elephant grass on foot.

There has now swum into the picture a fourth consideration affecting alike still-hunting, true stalking and the shooting of dangerous game, and that is photography. Of no subject is greater nonsense talked than big-game photography. It is constantly and quite falsely compared to big-game shooting. You might as well compare photographing a snipe to shooting it. The one is a sport in the proper

NATIONAL PARK PICTURES

sense of the term, and the other is—science, recreation, what you will, but definitely not a sport. Both in their own way are admirable, both can be abused, and, in both cases, provided that their exponents can retain some sense of proportion the one can be made the handmaiden of the other.

Let us draw some comparison between them. Firstly as regards dangerous game. In this respect everybody with any knowledge will agree that shooting with a camera is not as dangerous a business as shooting with a rifle can be on certain occasions. The danger in shooting in ninety cases out of a hundred comes after the shot has been fired and not before it. Of the “professional” big-game photographers, the majority are covered by a rifle during their operations, and those who are not—I personally only know of two—have made a life-long study of the habits of game. I say this because too many reputations for fearless photography are made from motor-cars on the Serengetti plains.

Actually, and I readily admit it, it is more difficult to get a good photograph of a dangerous animal than it is to shoot it, even if it is less dangerous. But there is one distinction both of danger and difficulty which must be clearly stated, for it is quite naturally apt to mislead the uninitiated. The difference as regards both danger and difficulty between what may be termed “National Park” pictures and those taken under circumstances wherein the animals have not, to some degree at least, come to regard man with sophistication is enormous. It is my lot—in general a happy one—to handle more big-game

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

photographs in the course of a year probably than, I suppose, anybody else in this country. And of those pictures at least half are lion pictures. Of those lion pictures, which strike untold terror in Maida Vale, and cause countless breaths to be baited in Battersea, one can safely say that at least eighty per cent. were taken under conditions of comparative safety, allowing, of course, for the fact that a lion is always a lion. It is a curious fact that for every picture of buffalo or rhino, and in particular of buffalo, one will get half a dozen of elephant and, at least, a score of lion. There is one notable exception to the generalization I have made on the dangers of big-game photography. The "Mother and Child" picture must always entail a certain amount of danger, especially if one goes close to take it.

Personally, I would less soon photograph a rhino *uncovered* than any other animal, for he is such an uncertain beast, while the unwounded buffalo, lion or tiger—especially the former—will generally leave one alone. Of course, one may be unlucky and unhitch one's apparatus on a man-eater, but then that is on a par with the man from the *Tatler* unwittingly getting busy on Al Capone ("and friend"). Elephant, also, one must regard with dire caution. I think it fair to say that a good many elephant charges would be in the nature of demonstrations, but one must always remember when trailing one's tripod after an old bull that he has learnt a good deal about man and his methods of pursuit in his odd hundred years of life, that he is not going to differentiate between rifle or camera.

SERENGETTI LIONS

In considering a lion picture one must fix a far higher standard than in that of any other species. Grouping, background, expression: each must be judged from a very critical standard. It is not enough to display a lion's quarters buried in a fleshy background of dead water-buck.

Everybody knows nowadays that where lions are regularly fed, as on the Kenya and Tanganyika reserves, or in places where they are permanently undisturbed and meat is abundant, such as in the Kruger National Park of South Africa, they regard man with a complete lack of resentment. Captain and Mrs. Moore, who are the Game Wardens of the Serengetti plains in Tanganyika, have reduced the showing off of their lions to a fine art. It is their duty to entertain the distinguished guests of the Protectorate, and one blast of their horn (like John Peel's) awakens the lionine dead, and brings them frisking round the car to see what there is for dinner! I should think that Captain Moore and his lady must find ample play for their sense of humour, like the man at G.H.Q. whose duty it was to take distinguished visitors round the front-line trenches.

Again, if one has ever been through a country where the animals are quite unused to man, either absolutely virgin country, or one of those large tracts closed to man for many years as a sleeping sickness area, one realizes how far unsophistication can go. Last year I was in such an area in Uganda. Water-buck, kongoni and kob in large numbers would let one come to within forty or fifty yards of them, and would regard one with passive surprise, gallop off

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

a short distance and turn, like Whittington, again. Very different it was from the borders of Karamoja in the Northern Province, where I had been a fortnight before, and where native hunting is allowed. Here, even the least shy of beasts seemed as wary as polecats: shooting was definitely difficult, one had to work really hard for everything one got, and photography would have been impossible. There were the two poles: on the one hand not much more difficult than Whipsnade, and on the other hand quite impossible. So a photograph merely labelled "Uganda" would be only half the story.

Now, let us consider photography with reference to still-hunting. This calls for at least as high a sense of woodcraft as shooting with the rifle, and possibly higher. It certainly calls for the highest possible degree of patience. This sort of photography is, I think, of three sorts. Firstly, the purely fortuitous, the wanderer in the woodlands that clicks his camera and brings off a masterpiece. We may dismiss this. Secondly, there is photography from a previously constructed hide. And, thirdly, there is auto-photography, the trip wire which sets off a flashlight. Some of the most remarkable photographs of wild animals that have yet appeared are the results of auto-photography. I am thinking in particular of the remarkable pictures taken in India by Mr. Bengt Berg and Mr. F. W. Champion which appeared in the *Field*. These photographs were no matter of luck. They were the result of hard work and a thorough knowledge of jungle craft. A word of warning must be uttered here. There is besides the

HIMALAYAN PHOTOGRAPHY

baser sort of shooting man, the baser sort of photographer, who scatters detonating illuminant at random through the jungles, doing as much harm as indiscriminate shooting.

Finally, we come to the camera in stalking pure and undefiled. Here, the differences are multiplied not ten-fold but a hundred-fold. It is true that some really startling pictures have been taken in National Parks, but outside their boundaries I know of *no* really satisfactory pictures of hill animals. In fact, I will go so far as to say that it is almost impossible to get really satisfactory pictures of certain animals in the wild—markhor, the ovis ammon, ibex and so on. Colonel Stockley, one of the most experienced Himalayan shikaris of our time, took to photography a few years back, and succeeded in bringing back some of the best Himalayan results I have ever seen, but even so they fell far short of what he could have achieved under easier conditions. Everyone knows that if one can crawl to within a hundred and twenty yards of one of these animals with a rifle, say once in five stalks, one is doing quite well. It is a great deal harder to do so with a camera which entails, generally, a lot of focussing and other fumblings, and in certain cases necessitates one assuming, at least, a stooping position. And what sort of a picture of an ibex would one get at a hundred yards? Everybody knows that if one can get broadside on to within a hundred yards of a Scottish stag, one has no qualms about drawing a bead. One should feel that he is half-way to the larder. Even with the best of cameras that will give you a very indifferent picture.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

Niall Rankin, who has specialized in animal photography, and is, perhaps, the best all-round professional animal photographer to-day, is also an accomplished and experienced deer-stalker. He brings to bear on the difficulties of hill photography the highest possible combination of technical accomplishment. Yet, during the whole of one long stalking season, he could only get two or three comparatively indifferent pictures of red deer. Now, were Colonel Stockley to walk into the Yellowstone National Park, or Niall Rankin into, say, the Egyptian Government Reserve near Cairo, they could produce results that would make the public gasp. I have gone on labouring this point because I should like to see honour go in the proportion in which honour is due, and, in this connection, discrimination is necessary.

It is, of course, exceedingly easy to fake these nature photographs. Sometimes it is done by merely manipulating the background. One frequently gets still pictures, with the background blocked out (which one, naturally, concludes were the bars of a Zoo), and occasionally with the background put in—exotic tropical foliage or distant snow-capped peaks as a rule. I understand this is particularly easy in the case of films. That medium offering greater financial rewards offers greater scope for the fakes. One does not have to be very wise to pick out the faked film; where one is often left guessing is where the close-ups are perfectly convincing, and yet just too good to be true. They have, of course, been taken with tame or semi-tame animals, and after they have done their stuff one is switched away again to the back of

“BATTLES TO THE DEATH”

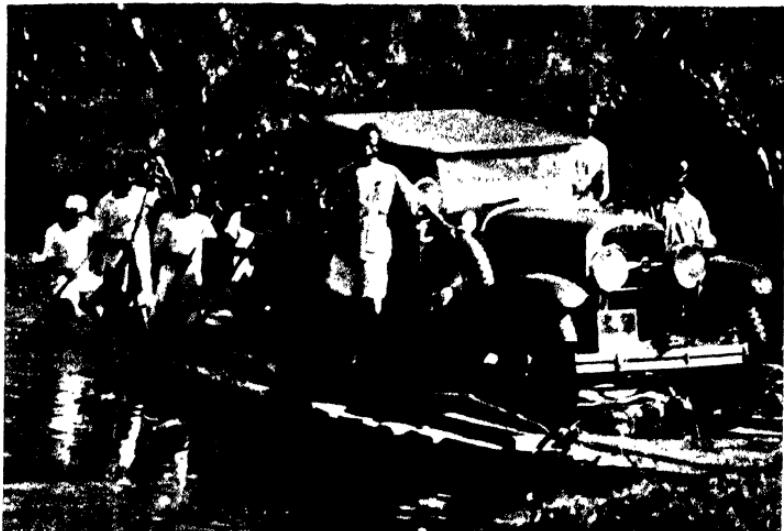
beyond. There was one film I remember, a very good one and peculiarly convincing, which had one exceptional “shot” in it, a lion jumping on a wart-hog as it emerged from its hole. It was all so swift and sudden and natural as to carry entire conviction, and yet—and yet! Could it be true? How many of us have had the good luck to chance on that once in a lifetime, with or without a camera, and here, in a short three months . . . ? Could it be true? Well, actually I gather that wart-hog was held by the back leg in its hole.

Then there is the question of “battles to the death”; tigers and elephants, buffalo and lion, and so on. Quite obviously in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred those are not natural fights; somebody has “made a ring” and joined the combatants in fray. Fortunately, our own Board of Film Censors are taking a strong line over these films and are preventing wild beasts butchering each other to make a film fan’s holiday. Only last week I saw a most spirited animal film from Indo-China, which contained some really fine tiger “shots.” Unfortunately, it didn’t stop there. In the neighbourhood of Angkor-Wat were two 30-foot pythons, a giant panda, several “man-killing” apes (apparently on holiday from Borneo), and a “missing link” (whose essential digits were the most prominently missing characteristic), which looked remarkably like an African galogo. One Cambodian lady was carried off by an ape armed with a blow-pipe and darts, and another was severely mauled by a tiger, both, apparently, without much harm. Such ingenuousness disarms criticism.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

There is one more sort of photograph which it is very difficult to detect. The picture of a wounded animal which is passed off as a genuine photograph —the animal being either at bay or unable to make off. Of course, nobody ought to take or publish such photographs, but these things do happen. Personally, whenever I see a peculiarly good close-up of a beast normally difficult to photograph, kudu, say, or sambhur or roan, I always scan it very closely in case it fall into this category. Certainly there can be no more barbarous practice than to prolong the suffering of a beast that one should have hoped to kill outright, or to wish for any memorial of its death agony. I remember once attending a continental exhibition of big-game photographs—30 per cent. of the exhibits were nude African women—and there were several specimens of this type of picture which evoked considerable applause. I was able to plead my lack of knowledge of Ruritanian, and to pass no comment.

And, yet, less than a year ago I was nearly tempted to do the same thing myself, so who am I to pass judgment? It was on the trip already mentioned when I went out to shoot with Samaki Salmon in Uganda. We had gone up to Karamoja for a rhino shoot. We camped in an old and very pleasant government camp at Rom, and here we were greeted by Angelico, a well-mannered but spineless youth, who, as the proud possessor of some K.A.R. under-clothes, becomes the official cicerone to visitors. He had been told to locate a rhino ; the whole country, he said, swarmed with them—hundreds and hundreds.



CROSSING THE NILE



TWO KARAMAJONS (WITH THEIR BABY) AND THE RHINO

A GRUMPY RHINO

“Cross-examined”—as they say in the police reports—he couldn’t put a finger on even one. He was cast forth with much genealogical detail. There then appeared an elderly Karamajong gentleman, very grumpy, and wearing some ostrich feathers behind his ears—no more and no less. We called him Mercury. “Faru?” He said “Faru.” Yes, he knew where there were Faru. It was very hot and the whole proceeding struck him as ridiculous, yet as five shillings had been mentioned, he’d go. He departed, grumbling. Two hours later he returned grumpier than ever. “Come on,” he said. We came. Was he a fraud? He took us off, still muttering, for about an hour. “The rhino’s 200 yards from here,” he said. “The rhino’s in that bush.” We approached. It was. Slowly we circled round. The rhino—a cow—was making up her mind which way to exit. I was trying to make up my mind which way to shoot. She exited and I shot. The rhino went on. I knew, however, that she was hit, and we followed. She circled, and after about half a mile turned back into some high grass. She was facing away, snorting indignantly. I gave her two barrels of my D.B. .450 Holland, and I knew that they were there or thereabouts. She gave a grunt and made off at a rate of knots, tail heavenwards. It seemed incredible. We pursued. Soon we reached the edge of the thick stuff and there she was legging it across Africa, about 300 yards ahead. Hounds came out of covert with the proverbial blanket over them. The pace quickened. Members of the pack who had previously been rather *caur-de-*

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

bauf plunged forward heroically over the open plain. The rhino disappeared into a thicket, but as the pack drove forward she broke away on the other side. We came through that thicket like the Quorn passing through Ranksborough Gorse on a breast-high scent. The poor old beast was slowing up, and we were gaining. When I was about a hundred yards off I stopped, got my breath and gave her both barrels of my D.B. .450. They were both good shots and must have been very near the heart. She turned and faced me, a magnificent picture of courage ; she took a few steps towards me, wheezing with rage. I had fired my two cartridges as well as the extra two that I carry in my pocket just in case. I turned to Musia for two more. (Musia was my gun-bearer, of whom much more later in the book.) He was panting up a hundred yards behind with the rest of the pack. Behind me was the individual with the camera, less heavily laden and so more fleet of foot. There was the old rhino fifty yards or less away, the setting sun gilding her back, a fine heroic sight. It would have been a splendid photograph. The attendant—he knew his part—proffered the camera. Almost I fell for him. After all I *couldn't* shoot, and nobody would ever know. . . . And then I thought of Ruritania, and those pictures of crippled lions and the crowds in the corner where those studies of nude black women were exciting animated speculation and comment. I waved my attendant away, and waited for Musia. I still feel it was a gesture !

My own efforts—and the perspicacious reader will feel he has long perceived that this has been coming

RIFLE OR CAMERA

—have almost invariably been crowned with failure. I have come to the conclusion that one may be a photographer or a shooter, but one cannot combine the two. One must be a photographer *or* a big-game shot. In the former case the rifle will be a necessary accompaniment in the event of one's wishing to take close-ups of elephant or rhino ; in the latter, the camera or cine-kodak will provide one with some pleasant pictures of camp, of one's servants, and, if one is so minded, of oneself, rampant upon a dead animal. “Alone I did it.” They also provide one with the ability to “Live your holiday over again. Let the kiddies enjoy it, too.”

I, personally, have never unshipped my camera till I have shot my head, and then there is usually no time left for extensive photography. I got some marvellous photographs of water-buck down on the Aiugi River last year in Uganda. Unfortunately, the rain descended on the porter carrying my camera and lunch-basket in unfailing torrents. Hoping to gain the favour of the *bwana* my minion thrust the lunch-basket containing the remnants of a packet of sandwiches and an uneaten hard-boiled egg under my water-proof for their greater shelter, but left the camera exposed to the full force of the downpour. The result was that its insides, of which I understand about as much as I do of what is under the bonnet of my car, completely seized up, and the photographs were destroyed.

Then there was the famous mountain goat episode. On our journey home to Banff from the Palliser Valley, Frank Philipps and I spied a couple of moun-

PHOTOGRAPHY AND OTHER MATTERS

tain goats high up the mountain. It was probably the last chance I would get of using my camera, and, so far, I hadn't photographed anything bigger than a whisky-jack. It was a dull, dour day, and we were longing to camp. However, I said I would have a crack at it. Frank scoffed. I tied up the patient Jim at the bottom of the hill and started to ascend. It was a stiffish climb and it took me over an hour to get below the goats. They were still *in situ*, both of them, sitting down; they were on a broad V-shaped ledge below a cliff, just beyond the point of the V. To get at them, one could either advance from the left, more or less in view, or come skulking round the corner which would probably set them off at the double. I decided on this latter course, and hoped that if they made off they would stop about thirty yards up the hill and have another look. I accordingly focussed my camera to this end. It is a large and impressive machine, all knobs and levers clamouring to be correctly turned, of the type that is used to reveal to anxious millions the correspondent leaving the court.

Cautiously and more cautiously I reached the point of the V. As I did so, I hear a rock go hurtling down the hill. "They're off," I thought, and went without a tremor round the corner. There in front of me were the two goats—fast asleep. Unfortunately, they were backside on to me, and the only photograph I could get was of two shaggy white buttocks at very close range. I began to step backwards, as in the presence of Royalty, and to fumble with the focussing gadgets. Just as I got the goats

A FRUITLESS CLIMB

into focus, the nearest one woke up. He turned and looked at me. The expression of goatish amazement—"how the hell did you get there"—on that beast's face was worth the climb ; it was worth a climb up Everest. They then catapulted up the hillside like a shot from a bow, while I began to fiddle the camera back into focus again. I should add that the light had by now almost completely gone. However, I took four fairly long exposures, and Mr. Murray rightly thinks that the results aren't good enough for this book. My camera is a most expensive reflex machine and I was as near the beast (say thirty yards) as anybody has any right to be, but what with the light and the excitement and this and that, the best I could do was that white blob on a black background. Yet, he would have been "a gift" before my unerring tubes.

Admittedly, I am the sort of man whose watch won't go and whose typewriter sticks, and whose fountain pen leaks ; admittedly, I should never be let loose with a camera ; admittedly, I have no patience. Yet, I am convinced that to photograph animals *in the wild* with the apparatus at present obtainable requires a greater degree of technical skill, physical energy, patience and knowledge of the quarry than it does to shoot them. And although I am going to stick to my last, and that last is shooting, I have nothing but admiration for those who make Nature photography their recreation.

CHAPTER IV

DIVERS MUTTONS

I HAVE tried to draw some comparison between stalking and still-hunting in general, and now I can unburden myself of some stalks in particular which have meant much to me and which may serve to illustrate my views.

Many people have their favourite species, of which there may be found half a dozen distinct types in various parts of the world. The stag group (a very large one), the gazelles, the oryx family. Of all these the sheep have always had the most irresistible appeal to me. They are a widely spread family : they stretch from Siberia to Sardinia, from Alaska to Mexico. They carry a noble trophy. But first, and very much foremost, they offer the finest stalking in the world. We all have our dream-country. Mine is Central Asia. There, where the free air blows across the roof of the world, is *Ovis Poli*, and a few hundred miles farther on *Ovis Karelini* and the true *Ovis Ammon*. Some day all my ships will come home. Perhaps—who knows?—this book will find favour with anxious millions, become a book of the month and accrue serial rights, and film rights, and translation rights, be spoken of with condescension by Mr. Howard Spring, and be praised by Mr. Compton Mackenzie. Well, that is not very probable, but the

THE LAINZER PARK

day will come and may it not be before the salt has entirely lost its savour.

With the Indian sheep family I have a fairly solid acquaintance. *Ovis ammon*, *bharrel*, *sharpu* and *oorial*. I have stalked them all. I have tried on various occasions to get a Sardinian moufflon, but that is an arrangement fraught with very grave difficulty, exactly why I cannot tell. Sardinian moufflon have been introduced into the Lainzer Park in Vienna, the old Imperial hunting ground of 12,000 acres. Here, fattened by the richer grasses of the plains, their horns surpass those of even the best of their native cousins. I was offered the chance of shooting one last year, but somehow shooting park animals, even when the park is the size of a very fair Scottish forest, does not appeal to me. I have had such splendid days hunting the sheep on his own natural hillside that I have little stomach for his pursuit out of his own environment. But besides this I believe that some of the Austrian noblemen have introduced them wild onto the hills of Styria, which is perfectly good natural sheep country. And here one day I hope to shoot them. I might add in passing that they are rather frowned on in Styria as they do not prove comfortable bedfellows for the chamois, the great prize of the Austrian shooting-man.

Two years ago I was able to enlarge my knowledge of the sheep family, and I made the journey to British Columbia for a Bighorn. One is only allowed one sheep on the British Columbian licence. What, said incredulous friends, 6,000 miles to shoot a sheep?

DIVERS MUTTONS

They looked at me searchingly and recalled that my great Aunt Alicia had got very queer towards the end of her life, and had thrown the rice pudding at her nurse. 6,000 miles for a sheep? 60,000!

Actually that sheep took a lot of getting. Frank and Charlie Phillips, my two guides—and two better do not exist—took me out from Banff over the Asiniboine Pass towards the Cross River. We crossed the Simpson Pass in perfect stalking weather, shot a Rocky Mountain goat at the foot of the pass and went over to the headwaters of the Cross. Everything seemed set fair.

Now my time was limited, and the sooner I shot that sheep the better it would be for me. Besides, as one is only allowed one, we naturally counted on "looking over" several before we found a worthy quarry. Well, no sooner had we got over the Asiniboine Pass than we found that somewhere down in the Kootenays, to the South of us, a first-class forest fire was blazing, with the result that with every step we took forward visibility became more and more impaired, for the wind was blowing the smoke up in our direction. The fire itself may have been a hundred miles off.

We halted and made a camp after two days' trekking, and ascended the mountain-side and established a small advance camp high up the mountain. I, fresh from ten days in train and ship, and ten months on an office stool, found that ascent most trying. It seemed as I staggered up the last incline to where we made our camp to be the ultimate of all Everests, though when we really got to work the next day it

“PEAK SUCCEEDS PEAK . . .”

was clear that it had been but a stroll over the outlying foothills.

The next day visibility was most indifferent, and we could only use glasses up to about three-quarters of a mile. We set off under these depressing conditions to climb the most colossal mountain, beyond which was the sheep country. Now, there are two sorts of mountains as all hill stalkers well know. There is the inclined plane of 45° , and there is the wall of the house variety. There are no lesser gradients. This one was of the latter species. We all of us have our little vanities. Mine is that I think I can walk, especially in the hills. The psalmist delighted not in any man's legs, but I am foolish enough to be proud of my own. I very soon realized that Frank had me beaten to a cocked hat. He was dawdling to let me catch up—dawdling with the utmost possible tact, but still dawdling. I, who had dawdled for an elderly and pursuing grampus on more than one occasion myself, knew the symptoms only too well. I redoubled my efforts, but by the time, an hour later, that he had reached the top of the ridge I was extremely tired. And there I had, I repeat it with pleasure, at least enough grace to admit it. Up to that point there had been between us a sort of tacit agreement that it was all just a pleasant stroll. And what made it so damnably annoying was that I believe it was for Frank, because he was, I think, almost the best white man on a hill I have ever seen.

We sat down on the ridge from where we should have been able to survey twenty leagues of country.

DIVERS MUTTONS

Actually we could see about a mile, and that with no great ease. "Look here," said Frank, "you're not quite fit yet. You stop here and keep your glass moving. I'll go over the next ridge and see if there's anything there. There's no point in your half killing yourself to look into a smoke cloud." I agreed with a humility that was positively Franciscan. The pill had been a bitter one to swallow, but like most other pills it was good for me.

Frank not only crossed the next ridge but the one beyond that, and again another one. The fog grew denser. I brooded on my fallen glory, till, finally, he returned. He had walked in the fog right into two very small rams. He had covered the whole basin and had seen nothing else. There was nothing doing. We came down like Moses from the mountain, but without tablets. We repeated the whole process again another march down the valley. Again without result, and again in a smoke barrage. Ten days of the three weeks I had allotted to this part of the world had now passed, and the sheep, the object of all our journeying, was about as far off as when I left Banff. We had now reached the best spot of all where Frank and Charlie were certain I would find a sheep, if it only cleared. When we went to bed that night the visibility was perhaps a murky mile. If it was to rain, the air would clear. But there was no particular reason to expect rain, for every day so far had been baking hot.

Yet that night at about ten o'clock I heard a patter on the tent above. Was it—could it be—rain? It was. Good steady unfailing Jupiter Pluvius. I felt

THE HEAD OF THE CREEK

like Elisha watching the cloud no bigger than a man's hand. But there was no need to gird up my loins. I nestled down into my sleeping-bag and slept the sleep of the contented. Never shall I forget the dawn next morning. Last night we could see two miles ; in the morning we could see two and twenty, nay two and forty miles to the rolling blue of the Kootenays. It was a supreme moment. I felt like a Kulak suddenly released from a Soviet concentration camp or a German Jew on arrival in Great Britain.

Charlie was left at the base camp, and Frank and I set off with Jim, our most sure-footed pack-pony, up the mountain. Our objective was a great amphitheatre in the hills at the head of the valley where we camped. To reach it by way of that valley was a stiff but quite normal climb. But Frank was not in favour of an advance on that side. It was not a good line to spy from, and we would in all probability disturb some of the sheep before ever we had had time to get a shot. And we had to keep that basin quiet at any price. So we made a long detour and approached the valley from over the watershed, that same watershed which we had already twice ascended with so much labour. It was here, however, both higher and steeper. It seemed to me incredible that it should be so, but it was. Before we had risen many hundred feet I realized how much better, how infinitely wiser it would have been to have chosen the gentler ascent up the valley, even though we frightened every sheep in the two Americas. What Jim thought about it, and how ever he got up that slope with quite a considerable load, I cannot

DIVERS MUTTONS

say. It would have defeated the average mule; it would certainly have defeated any other pack-horse. Jim, though at times hard put to it, remained placid.

After five hours' climbing we reached a steep glissade of, perhaps, 400 feet of slippery grass, and Jim could get no farther. After some search we found a little platform of about twelve feet by four on the hillside where we could insinuate our valises (everything else was at a one-in-three gradient), and here we erected a shelter, lit a fire and made camp. Jim was picketed out. There was water and grass, and he seemed to like gradients. The top of the watershed was only 500 feet above.

It was cold that night, very cold, and we were out over the watershed early, and glad to be moving. Up on the high tops there was a chilling wind, and a prolonged survey showed us no sheep. The prospect was a depressing one. We were situated in an admirable position for spying, as within a couple of miles of us were the head of four separate valleys, all combining in a tangle of mountain-tops from which the descending ridges bifurcated. One could move from one to the other in an hour or so, and in the course of four hours one could have looked over a great deal of ground. By about nine o'clock we had completed our inspection to the north and east. There were no sheep to be seen, and we could in no wise account for the lack of them. Frank was openly disheartened. I felt that the stars in their courses were fighting against Sisera, the worst frame of mind for the big-game hunter. And it was still very cold.

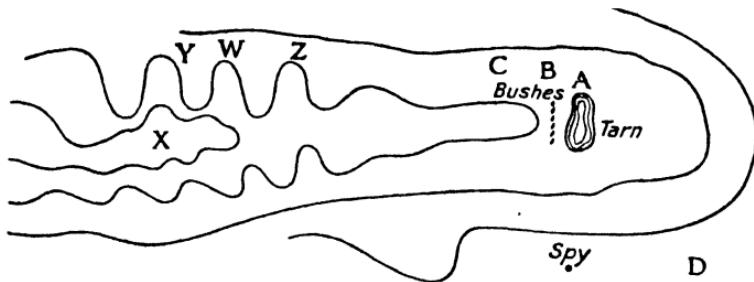
THE QUARRY SIGHTED

We then moved on over an enormous slope of shale to the head of the valley at whose foot stood our camp. And there on the other side of the valley, perhaps three miles away, and an eight-mile walk, with a rise and fall of a couple of thousand feet in between, were three just discernible grey blobs that Frank pronounced to be sheep. Our spirits rose tempestuously. True it was that they were probably ewes; true also that even if we could get up to them it would mean a night on the open hillside without even a blanket, but, even so, there was mutton to be had, and there was still a good deal of ground nearer which might hold sheep. We advanced with sprightly though cautious tread.

We were now in a horseshoe-shaped cup in the hills. We were on the left outside wing. At the top of the horseshoe (opposite which the ground fell away more or less steeply down the valley) there was a tiny piece of flat ground with a little tarn on it. There was no cover at all except what was afforded by holes in the ground, and a few stunted bushes. As we descended the hillside the ground below became visible, and we had not gone far before Frank sank down behind a rock. I followed suit. There across the valley, perhaps a mile away, was another party of sheep, and infinitely nearer than those we had first spotted. If that party held a shootable head, I would be saved an infinity of labour, and I would sleep that night, if not in my bed, at least between my blankets. And then immediately below we spotted three more sheep as it were between the two points of the horseshoe. They

DIVERS MUTTONS

complicated matters a good deal, for Frank was of opinion that the biggest head would be found in the upper group. Two of those below were quite shootable, but the upper one, he said, was definitely good. Those below us we could stalk comparatively easily. We had only to descend the hill from rock to rock till we got above them. But the big fellow was a difficult problem. He was on the open hill-side with three smaller rams, and even if we could make the circuit of the horseshoe without being spotted by them, the three rams below might give the alarm by precipitate flight. Which would I choose? Which would you have chosen? Which would anybody have chosen? It is not for nothing that the British are the supreme exponents of "it will be all right on the night!"



- A WAPITI APPEARED HERE.
- B MULE DEER APPEARED HERE.
- C BLACK BEAR APPEARED HERE.
- D GOAT.
- W SENTINEL RAMS.
- X LOWN PARTY OF SHEEP.
- Y SHEEP KILLED HERE.
- Z SHEEP FIRST SEEN HERE.

To get round to our big sheep we had first of all to descend a slope covered with shale and rocks to the tarn. This was not difficult. To get past the

EMBARAS DE RICHESSES

tarn was difficult in the extreme. There was a thin streak of bushes like an ill-kept hedge behind which we might creep, but even then we would be most of the time right in view.

In due course we reached the nearer edge of the tarn. And as we did so there suddenly appeared, about 300 yards away over the hillside, a fine—a very fine—wapiti stag! He floated up as it were out of nothing, like the stag to St. Hubert. What he was doing, I know not, whence he came, or whither departed. For he was miles away from his native forest and plumb in the middle of the sheep country. However, he descended to the tarn, with superb aplomb, turned over and wallowed in the mud, a charming domestic scene. At the moment, however, Frank and I, clinging to the insufficient shelter of a small rock after the manner of the Better 'Ole, did not at all relish the intrusion, for if he made off through the sheep he would, no doubt, frighten them away. After a minute or two he got our wind, I fancy. The rut had not yet begun and his senses were still keen. Like Scott's Monarch of the Glen he for "a moment snuffed the tainted gale" and then made off, with dignity, back over the hill. We heaved a sigh of relief, and turned back to the sheep.

Two of the small rams were feeding; the ram was gazing fixedly in our direction; he was now, perhaps, 800 yards off. We lay perfectly still. "The god-dam sheep's seen us," whispered Frank in a voice of anguish. I hugged the rock even closer. After about five minutes he began to feed on again, and

DIVERS MUTTONS

we breathed once more. (We seem to have spent our time on this stalk heaving sighs of relief and breathing again!) Just as we were about to crawl forward once more, there appeared, about 400 yards from where the wapiti had made his entrance, a mule deer, and a very good mule deer, too—the first we had seen on that trip. It was certainly more his country than it was the wapiti's, but still his appearance was very surprising. Was this a wood near Athens? Why this *embaras de richesses*? At any other time we would have been delighted to have seen him, the more so as he approached to us with all the dignity of the wapiti, and very much more of the grace, and offered an easy shot at about a hundred yards. But sheep were our quarry, however tempting he might be. Then he, too, got our wind and made off after the wapiti.

With our eyes fixed on the sheep we proceeded to crawl the 200 yards to the other side of the tarn. When the sheep's head went up we stopped; when he continued to feed we continued. We crawled side by side to diminish the size of the optical affront that we offered him, a race of tortoises. Finally, we reached the other side of the tarn where we sank down beside a bush and rested.

At that instant it was that an ancient black bear came lolloping along at his own easy and ungainly amble, circled round us for a minute or two and made off. Then, indeed, we stared at each other with a wild surmise. Here on this small patch of ground, perhaps 600 by 400 yards, we had seen in the course of less than an hour sheep, wapiti, mule

A BLACK BEAR

deer and black bear. How they all came to be there I know not. It was an occurrence unique in Frank's experience and a piece of extraordinary luck for me that I should have been there to share it. In Africa such a queer mix-up of species would have been an every-day affair ; in the plains of India it would not have been particularly unusual. But it must be almost unique in Canada. And it all happened to a professional journalist. One's belief in an all-providing providence is obviously strengthened ! Had at that moment a grizzly bear carrying caribou horns suddenly appeared I do not think either of us would have been surprised !

The black bear lolloped off in the direction of the sheep and he moved them on over the ridge where they were feeding, out of our sight, so we were able to advance with less deliberation. We had now reached the same side of the horseshoe as the sheep were on, and there were half a dozen parallel ridges between us and them offering very fair cover. The wind was blowing uphill, that was across our direct track to the sheep. So far things were fairly favourable unless the black bear had really disturbed them. We pressed on. On topping the spur that sheltered us we saw that the three small rams and the big fellow had crossed the next ridge but two, while one small ram was sitting down facing in our direction ; doubtless he was preparing for his midday siesta, as it was now about eleven o'clock. We waited for half an hour, but he did not move. We were now faced with three alternatives. The first, and probably the most profitable, was to abandon the big ram and

DIVERS MUTTONS

to make for the three immediately below, for whom the wind was right, and whose heads, on closer inspection, proved better than we had thought. The second was to wait where we were and hope the small ram would move ; the third was to mount the hill and come round him from above. But, though some way away, we would be in full observation for at least 200 yards if we did. Frank and I discussed the possibilities, and I plumped for the last. I am not a believer in prolonged waits in stalking, unless it is quite patent that there is no alternative with a fair chance of success. And as to choosing the less without, at least, an effort to achieve the greater—well that was obviously unthinkable.

Now, I had noticed that the small sentinel was about 400 yards lower down the hill than the place where the big ram had disappeared. It seemed to me that there was a chance, feeble and slender though it be, that if we moved the youngster from above he would go off downhill without disturbing the big ram higher up, provided his descent was not too Gadarene. So, we moved as high up the hill as our covering rise would permit, crossed over two intervening ridges (both quite small) and found ourselves above the young ram. He rose and fixed us with an unpleasing stare. We sat out on the hillside feeling like an archdeacon in a nudist colony. He watched us for five minutes ; fortunately the wind was with us, and he got no alien smell. The alien apparition was stolidly intriguing to him ; an alien odour would have been anathema. There can be

FROM A VIEW TO A KILL

little doubt that he had never before seen a human being.

We continued to simulate a pair of boulders, and, after a bit, his head went down and he began to feed. We wriggled ourselves, still seated, up the hill. He fixed us again. We froze. He fed on. We wriggled. And so on through ten minutes and, almost, the seat of our trouserings. Finally, we reached the top of the ridge and looked over. The great sheep was not there. He must have fed on over the hillside. We passed across and peered over. Beyond and above was 600 yards of open country. Well, if he wasn't there he must be below—or had he fled? I know we both felt pretty hopeless. . Below us the slope was convex. Our vision was limited to 100 yards. "I think he's gone on," whispered Frank. "We'd better have a look down there," I whispered back. "All right," he said. We tiptoed down, feeling rather like two children caught stealing the grapes from the pantry table.

We came to a clump of bushes. There, 150 yards below, were the sheep—or rather some sheep. A big ram and three others. But was it our ram? Perhaps he had gone on after all? And when one has come 3,000 miles to shoot a sheep (and only one sheep) one does not want to shoot the wrong one. "Shoot him," said Frank. "Is it ours?" said I. "Is it the big one?" "For God's sake shoot him," hissed Frank in my ear. "Get on, he'll be off." I thought he was playing for safety—the bird in the hand principle. I was determined to have nothing worse than the best. "Is it the big one?" I persisted. "It's

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the biggest sheep in these sanguinary mountains," hissed Frank, who was watching the ram, now thoroughly interested, with a fixed stare. I knew enough about sheep to know that in about another five seconds he would be off. I hate taking standing shots. I like a rested rifle, and in hill stalking one is generally able to get it—at least to achieve a lying position—if one is only determined to do so. But if I was to wait here I would wait for ever. Shooting directly downhill is also my hoodoo; although I know perfectly well that I should aim low, I am generally a little high. I hated that shot. My rifle waved like a semaphore arm. "Shoot," said Frank, in a voice of resigned despair. I pulled myself together, and shot. The sheep dropped dead in his tracks and slithered away down the hill.

We were frankly and unashamedly jubilant—and not the least because we were spared the night on the hill that both of us had said we would suffer gladly, but to which neither of us could honestly say we were looking forward. How jovially, how glamorously we went over the incidents of the stalk. With what care did we measure the horns—thirty-nine inches, and as fine and heavy a pair of conks as ever adorned the summit of a Greek pillar. We assured each other that no better head would be taken into Banff that year. We oozed mutual congratulation and admiration from every pore. But there had to come a truce to these pleasantries. It was afternoon and we had to get the head off and carry it home, over a brace of Karakorums and a Hindu Kush.

AN OLD BILLY

To Frank it was the most dreadful blow to leave all that meat on the hillside. All we could do was to take the best of the tenderloin—all else had to be abandoned. Your good Canadian is about as keen on leaving his beast to rot on the hillside as is your Scottish stalker. “When I think of all the poor devils in Banff,” Frank would say, “to whom that meat would be a godsend, I am filled with despair.” However, it was clear enough that no pony, not even Jim would ever get to it, so there it had to remain. I took the two rifles and the meat, and felt I could barely stagger. Frank then lifted the sheep’s head and horns on to his back, and made off as if he was taking a brisk stroll down the main street of Banff! I could barely have lifted it! And thus and thus did he carry it the whole way home, the bleeding head skin falling back over his shoulders like the red cape of a Polish Hussar. Slowly we wended our way up the hillside, along past the tarn where, a couple of hours before, we had lain in precarious hiding. Slowly up the shale slope, beyond, and on to the mountain from which we had done our stalk.

As we sat and rested ourselves, and looked back over the scene of our triumphs, Frank remarked that it only needed a goddam grizzly to come out to complete the circus. As he spoke, a stone was loosened in the cliff above the tarn and splashed with a final plomp into its waters. We looked across the hill. There about 500 yards away, remote, unfriended, solitary, slow, an old billy goat was wending his way across the mountain. He was the embodiment of the

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true Onslow, the perfection of *Festina Lente*. We let him come to within 200 yards of us crouching behind a rock, when it seemed impossible that he should not see us any longer. I pressed the trigger, as he paused in his swift, unharried progress upon a rock, and I saw the bullet strike six inches above his back. Fool that I was. It was the one blot upon a perfect day, for had I waited I now think that he would have come to within a hundred and fifty, and, perhaps, a hundred yards of us. He treated that bullet as a *Nunc dimittis*. He was away over the mountain like a nigger from a raided bucket-shop.

That raised us to five different species in one day, all within a few hundred yards of each other. It only remained to see a grizzly bear to score a "possible." And we would particularly have liked to see him as we wanted one, and now that our sheep was behind us we could afford to disturb the hill with further shooting. In point of fact he did not transpire, and grizzly or no grizzly we were still a long way from camp. We pushed on, but our halts became increasingly frequent, our objective seemed to remain exasperatingly distant. However, by about half-past four we reached camp, and how Frank managed to do it I do not know. At the time it filled me with wonder and amazement. It does so still.

It was at this juncture that we determined to finish in style and descend the hill that night. There was still three hours of daylight, and if we couldn't reach our base camp we could, at least, get sufficiently

BENIGHTED

far towards it to ensure our camp being more or less on the level. We had had a fairly disturbed night wedged in at an angle of 45° . Jim, though he had splendid grazing, had obviously been on his four legs for thirty-six hours. It was definitely a moment for descent from Parnassus. Before moving, however, we decided to boil a cup of tea. It was many hours—twelve or so—since we had eaten, and were rain to come, droughts or brimstones, or solar eclipses, we would not forgo the cup that cheers. And thus watching a pot that would never boil wasted nearly an hour, an hour that was to prove critical, for when Jim was finally loaded, and we began to descend, the shadows were already lengthening.

The descent was a difficult one; twice we found ourselves in the forest with all traces of the track lost, and once on the edge of a precipice from which we had to turn back in disgust. And so, with about half the journey completed, we found ourselves benighted on the hill. “Hellish dark and smells of cheese.” The nose twitched in vain for the smell: where nothing seemed missing of the appearance of James Pigg’s immortal cupboard. To go on was to risk our horse. We decided to picket him and camp on the hillside. We off-loaded Jim, and unrolled our bedding, and soon there was a fire going and a mug of tea. The night was dark but quite warm. My body, which had become a connoisseur of contours of recent weeks, longed for a little preparatory levelling, but on the whole we agreed there was nothing to be regretted. We assured each other of the

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romance of such an evening ; we grew lyrical about Gentlemen in Vancouver now a-bed ; we agreed that thus and thus only could the soul be at one with Nature ; we misquoted Stevenson's *Requiescat* at each other. It was in this exalted frame of mind that we went to bed. The fire flickered and flickered and fell, Jim crop-cropped at the long bush grass, and the sleep of exhaustion bore me away to the pursuit of greater and even greater sheep.

About two hours later the rain began. Harder and harder, heavier and heavier did the heavens decant their benison upon us. Two nights earlier we were praying for rain. To-night our feelings towards it were definitely lay. We wrapped our valises round us and shivered till dawn round the smoking remnants of the fire. From time to time I rolled off in an uneasy slumber, and then woke with a jerk to unpleasant reality. About an hour before dawn—when damp chill had turned to damp shiver—the rain stopped, and, at the expense of half a ton of matches, enough fire was provoked to boil tea. It was at this juncture I recall that a bag of flour, which I had routed from the store-box in the hopes of finding sugar, burst like high explosive over the remains of our eatables, and gradually turned to an adhesive dough in the prevailing damp. It was a finish in style, but not the style we would have chosen, and when Jim and Frank and I were welcomed back in the base camp by Charlie we had no doubts at all that however wide and starry the sky might be, there are moments when the hunter is happiest home from the hill.

THE ZOGI-LA ROUTE

That hunt after the sheep will always be one of the happiest of my life. It was really hard work, we had a splendid stalk on the open hillside, and I got a head which, though by no means a record, is certainly among the best brought back to England from the Rockies of recent years. I always compare it in my mind with my first ammon in Ladak. I had then travelled for about fourteen days on foot from Srinagar. Personally I travelled on foot because I couldn't afford to hire a riding-pony, but if I went again and was not in that unenviable position, I should do the same. By the time that one has crossed the Zogi-La one ought to be able to double march without undue exhaustion, and the twenty to twenty-four miles a day makes one extremely fit for the shooting. One has to seek one's ammon at, say, 15,000 feet, and one needs to be fit to do it. The Leh route is probably the best organized in Asia, and one should have no real difficulty with transport on it. I travelled concurrently with the Roosevelt expedition to Central Asia, which brought back the record ibex—and they had over sixty ponies. (I had six !) So it will be understood that one need not expect that reasonable demands for transport will not be met.

I will not go into lengthening descriptions of the country beyond Leh, as it is fairly well known. But it is the identical spot mentioned by St. Paul where four winds meet. The tempest in either a greater or a lesser degree wages unceasingly. The ground is increasingly flat as one progresses beyond Leh. Round that town there are mountains sufficiently

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high to be the home of ibex ; beyond they merge more and more into the rolling uplands that extend into Tibet. One meets here and there a shepherd with his flocks ; there are a few struggling villages gathered round a sparse and struggling cultivation, miserable hovels to house the "*ruris opes parvæ*," which, if I remember aright, Ovid found so deplorable at Tomi. But compared to Ladak, Tomi was as Paris-Plage or Eden Roc.

Finally we arrived at Hanlé where we were in our ammon block. It might be worth while mentioning here that Ladak is divided into a number of blocks, which are allotted to sportsmen according to a more or less equitable priority, so many in the first leave, so many in the second. For ammon, the second leave is, undoubtedly, the best, as it more nearly coincides with the rut. For practically all other Himalayan game sportsmen urge for the first leave as shooting is easier owing to the snow keeping the game lower. Accordingly many young officers making for Ladak try the first leave, when they would do better in the second. Not being strictly a mountainous country the question of snow forcing the game lower is one of less importance.

Certain of these blocks are from time to time closed for long periods to preserve or restore them. Unfortunately such blocks are great centres of native poaching. The presence of a British sportsman in a block is a strong deterrent. Apart from the fact that he will "see off" the poachers, the villagers know that if they don't preserve the game after a fashion, no visitors will come to buy their milk and

A FIRST AMMON

firewood. The local game preservation staff don't do much good. As Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Stockley, a peculiarly shrewd observer and one with long knowledge of the Himalayas, said in a recent article in the *Field*, "I have never seen a game guard beyond Leh."

We arrived, shikari chota, shikari, coolie and cook, at Hanlé on a freezingly cold day in early May. We spotted a herd of ammon fairly early next morning, the dawn of another freezingly cold day. We thought there was a decent head among them. Ammon have a most irritating habit of never appearing to be in full and definite retreat, and yet however hard one tries to get up to them they are always that couple of ridges away! By that night we had marked them to ground in a little corrie. Next morning we were out at dawn; the conditions were arctic; I was wrapped in every available garment so that my appearance was that of an esquimau and my pace was that of a tortoise. One by one, as the sun strengthened, was I to shed my garments, like Salome, on to the accompanying tiffin coolie.

We had not far to go. Our ammon, presumably no more anxious than we to leave what shelter they had, were still clinging to the concentric centre of the corrie, while we bobbed around the lee side of its circumference trying to find a place for a shot. The reader must imagine himself on the outside of a saucer about 600 yards across. If the quarry is in the middle, and his effective shooting range is something under 200 yards, the problem is easily intelligible. For just over two hours we watched those ammon,

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and it was only when the first warming glow of the sun began to cheer both them and us that they began to feed slowly up towards us. Waiting, I always think, is the worst thing in stalking. I will crawl up to anything, anywhere, over a snow-field, down the inner recesses of a bog or across the Styx itself. But waiting for the animal to reach the rock you have marked down as 150 yards away is, to a person of my impatient nature, almost unbearable. The temptation to shoot too soon is overwhelming. Surely he must be going to get our wind? In another five minutes I shall be too cramped to put finger to trigger. It is insufferable! Somehow or other the seconds of that two hours hammered themselves to an end. Ahad Malik and I selected the head after a great deal of discussion, for between three of those rams (it was a party of six) there was little to choose, and a sheep's head is, I think, the hardest head of all to judge, except, perhaps, the ibex of *wide span*, to me the most deceptive head of all.

Everything depended in that stalk on the wind holding more or less constant, and on our lying perfectly still behind the rock. For every minute that I lay there the chances of a successful shot became more and more remote, for nobody shoots well after a long wait. Well, finally, he reached my white stone. I hit him clear behind the heart; he galloped madly for thirty yards and tumbled over dead. The tension snapped like the Bridge of St. Luis Rey. Never have I known such exquisite relief; it was like morphia to a pain-ridden man.

THE GOLDEN FLEECE

As a stalk it was far less spectacular than the other, and, therefore, I have described it at less length, but it was my first great sheep—it set the crown on sundry oorial and bhurrel and sharpu, and it set the seal on my love for the finest stalking that can be had in the world—the wild sheep. I had started the quest, and I am still questing—in search of the Golden Fleece.

CHAPTER V

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

AS I have said in my previous chapter, luck plays a very important part in big-game shooting, and though British Columbia to Uganda is a far cry I will ask the reader to journey thither, partly to consider the question of luck and partly to read an unvarnished account of an African lion-hunt.

“The last taste of things gives them their name of sweet or sour,” a German proverb tells us, and yet, in sport, the final fling is usually a fruitless one. Whether we linger for just one more cast over the mill-pool, or stop out just ten more minutes on the cold, bleak hillside lest we spy a stag, our efforts are usually vain. Yet there can be nobody who has ever been a-hunting, from Nimrod onwards, who has not had a pathetic belief in the luck of the last day. And Nimrod inherited this pleasing trait from Adam, who took a walk round Eden while Eve was busy putting the last fashionable pleat into her new apron, in the hopes of finding the serpent gorged and sleeping. So, if we have shot a record head, we stop on till the last *kilta* is packed or the last porter load hoisted headwards, hoping that there may yet be a better: if we have shot nothing, though we know full well there is nothing to shoot, we linger on and wait for the miracle that leads to Rowland Ward; and, hoping

“ALL RIGHT ON THE NIGHT”

thus, we eschew the beckoning fleshpots of Banff or Srinagar or Nairobi, where the hair on our faces is but fit to stuff tennis balls.

Hope, I repeat, has sprung eternally in my own bosom for many years, and I believe this failing to be essentially British. Native complacency calls it “seeing it through”: others, mindful of the nation of shopkeepers, call it “getting your money’s worth.” Personally, I put it down to a sort of illogical optimism—the “it’ll-be-all-right-on-the-night” feeling, of which the British are the supreme apostles.

Bitterly I recall an occasion, a last half-hour, in British Columbia, when I went out to search for the wapiti that I had failed to add to the bag. While I was away in the forest, the largest stag ever seen came down towards the camp, watched the ponies being loaded, and went off. Had I sat in camp . . . ! Actually, the providence that guards mad dogs and Englishmen sent a fall of snow that held me up for five days on the way home, and in those five days I shot a far bigger head—but that is another story.

Only once in my life has the luck turned for me at the very last moment, and this is the story of it. Quite an ordinary little story, but one for me that is graven in gold. We had gone down towards the Aiugi for lion, as far as the sleeping-sickness area would let us go. Much damage the lions do to the great herds of kob and water-buck, but they are a pork-fed lot as a whole, lacking something of the courage of the true bush-lion. For lions, like men, differ in character; but, even so, a lion is, when all is said and done, a lion.

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

We had only three days, and during the whole of the first of them it rained, long, torrential, never-ending rain, such as Somerset Maughan must have sat in when he wrote his story. On the second day the rain stopped at about 3 a.m. One was glad for oneself, but doubly glad for the servants : Simba and Kaula, the two gun-bearers, and the faithful John producing an admirable dinner under his booth of branches. The discomforts of the accompanying Acholi one can put up with. Naturally, one would not have them more uncomfortable than need be, but they seem to enjoy it. "After all," as Saki remarked, "it is the function of the Church mice to be poor."

Kaula and Simba are a contrast. Simba is the older of the two. He has been a gun-bearer now for twenty years, and why he did not meet violent death many years since, only the keepers of Elysian game-books can tell. He is as brave as his name (*Simba*, a lion) : *not* one of the pork-fed variety. He is the most loyal and trustworthy person in the whole Protectorate, hard-working, honest, faithful, a Gelert among men. But he is not a really finished hunter, for that is not his province. His main preoccupation on seeing a dangerous beast is how quickly and how closely he can approach in order to blow a hole in it, or, rather, for his *bwana* to blow a hole in it. Not so Kaula. He is the London newspaper boy turned Baganda : sharp as a needle, impudent, full of wickedness and deceit. He will tell you, with disarming candour, that after mature consideration he has decided to give up thieving. And high time,

LIONS!

too. Why have we no word for "*gamin*"? For Kaula is "*gamin*." But there is something devastatingly attractive about him, and he, too, is brave as a lion. Unlike Simba, he is a very good hunter. Kaula and Simba are bosom friends, though what they have in common besides a love of the chase it would be impossible to say. But, after all, what more could two friends want to have in common?

The third and unknown factor of our hunting party is Chongu. Chongu is a good, stolid, steady-going game guard who accompanied us, with one eye on the banks of the Aiugi (for he must keep us out of the Reserve) and the other probably on a tip. He kills his quota of elephants, does his work well enough, and is a person of importance in his own village. From Chongu we will not expect prodigies of valour or bush-craft, but, on the other hand, he will not let us down.

At 3 a.m. then the rain had stopped. We paused and turned over in our blankets with faint enthusiasm. An hour later there came a distant but definite roar; half hee-haw, half challenge; a modification of what dwellers in the N.W.R. postal area are well acquainted with. Lions! Our enthusiasm became distinct, and an hour later we are setting out in the direction of the challenge. There came a pause, and then there is another roar. Then silence. This is the story of a blank day, so I will spare the reader the long and weary pilgrimages we made along inconclusive spours, past week-old kills, through scrub and bush. It was an opportunity for Simba to show all his doggedness, for Kaula to display his ingenuity, for Chongu to

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

suggest, with deference, that we were better in camp, and for me to remember that to-morrow was the last day. And that I never shoot anything on the last day.

There was more rain that evening, and it was misty next morning as we set out in the dawn in the direction of the night's grunts, and there had been many of them. It was scarcely light, and through the mist the grunting seemed to come nearer, or we seemed to come nearer to the grunting. Simba, Kaula, myself and Chongu was the order of our approach. Suddenly, in front, there was a scampering of padded feet like foxhound puppies scattering before a cracked thong. There we were within twenty yards of a family of lions—*monsieur, madame et toute la famille*, and before Simba had passed back the rifle to me they had disappeared into the pillar of cloud beyond. We turned agonized eyes upon each other, and set grimly to follow the spoor, for our honour held us to it, though our hearts had no hope. But Fortune smiled. We followed the spoor—it was easy in that rain—for a mile or so without difficulty, and then suddenly there was a grunting and a grumbling in front of us, and there over the lip of a little valley was the lion sitting up about a hundred yards away, looking at us out of the high grass. I could see his head and his mane, the latter a full one, for it was fine open country, as good for the growing of a mane as Whipsnade itself. It was not a difficult shot, although not a sitter. I fired with the confidence of one who has done enough big-game shooting to think he knows all about it. Nothing hap-

A WARNING GROWL

pened. I gazed at the lion. Why didn't he collapse, or swoon, or do his stuff? Nothing happened. I reloaded (I was using the .375 Holland; Simba was behind with the double-barrel .450), and in one convulsive bound the lion had whipped round and disappeared.

I still thought he had been hit hard. Simba and Kaula were quite positive that he was not. Polite, but quite positive. *Arpana*, they returned to my flood of eloquence. *Arpana* (nothing). Chongu thought *Arpana*, too; he also thought that further pursuit was fruitless. Why not shoot a nice water-buck, which would be very well received in his village? We continued after the spoor. There was certainly no blood. Had I really missed after all? Down into a little stream-bed, flooded now with a week's rain. Here the lioness had joined the lion. There was still no blood. I began to suppose I *had* missed. Could I really have been such a chump? I had killed all the things that didn't matter dead as door-nails: now here was the prize of the last day and it had escaped me. Seven thousand devils!

Just in front there was a thick little copse, perhaps the size of a small fox covert. We followed the spoor into it. Seven-twenty-seven thousand devils, for we should never see that lion again. We should

... Ten yards off there was a menacing growl. There somewhere just in front was the lion. Where, I could not see. Again the growl. Was it a prelude to a charge or just a thus-far-and-no-farther warning? Simba sidled up with the second rifle. Kaula, I knew, was behind. Thus and thus we stood peering

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

into the bushes—and black as the pit it was, from pole to pole. There was obviously nothing to be done here. Slowly, as in the presence of Royalty, we retreated backwards. Fifty yards from the lion we held our Council of War. There were various counsels, but only one could claim the merit of being at once unswerving, definite, and practical. Chongu was of the opinion that this was a very evil lion, and that to pursue it further would be a folly, resulting in the death of us all. He warmed to his work. He knew this lion, he and his fathers before him. He was a monster of depravity, feeding only on the flesh of man, men such as us. Kaula and Simba laughed aloud. They taunted poor Chongu (who, after all, was speaking sound common sense : it was no part of his duties to go careering after lions in the thick). They told Chongu many things in their own dialect, cruel taunts I doubt not, whose meaning I would have given much to know. And there are few of us, as Sidney Smith says, who would not rather be hated than laughed at.

Chongu, shamefaced and muttering, fell to the rear. And the rest of us at length decided to try a flank approach. Cautiously, Agag-like, we moved up to the spot where the lion had been. Again, from twenty yards away, though from somewhat farther back, came the growling, a shade more menacing.

It was now clear to me that if we went on any farther the lion would charge. I was fairly confident in my ability to blast a hole in him with one of the two barrels of my .450 ; but still it was an awkward

A CONFERENCE

and unpleasant situation. I didn't want to have to explain away the mauling of one of my servants, quite apart from the other obvious considerations that would assail most of us under those circumstances. Together we withdrew again. Kaula and Simba began to throw stones: they hurled, too, dialectical aspersions on the lion's ancestry, of much the same sort as those with which they had taunted poor Chongu. The lion never budged, and the supply of missiles grew short. It was clear to me that so desultory a barrage could have little effect. Therefore, after the manner of the British Army during its September junketings, I ordered the "cease fire" and convened a conference.

One thing was certain. There were three alternatives. The first put forward by Chongu was to return to camp. This was cast out ignominiously. The second and third were either to follow the lion into the bush, or to force it out by beating on a fairly large scale. Simba and Kaula would give no reply as to their opinion, though I knew quite well that had I chosen the former they would have followed me in cheerfully. I had, however, no intention of trying to follow an *unwounded* lion into impenetrably thick bush. I did not owe it to the lion to finish him off, and I certainly owed it to my servants to display some circumspection. I therefore decided to send back to camp for that portion of the tribe of Acholi who were acting as my porters, and see if some sort of demonstration after the Joshua pattern would not bring about the downfall of this particular Jericho.

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

In the meantime, Kaula was placed to guard the farther side of the copse, while I seated myself on an ant-hill on the other with Simba, and began to eat my breakfast. To return again to Sidney Smith, "Fate cannot harm me. I have dined to-day."

It was now ten o'clock and the meal was welcome. I was just wringing the ultimate half-cup out of the thermos when suddenly from in front came a roar, loud and menacing. There was the *lioness*, as rampant as the supporter to the Royal Coat. I was breakfasting like the Israelites rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, and, in a flash, I had thrown down my pruning-hook and taken up my sword. But it took less than a flash for the lioness to whip back into the covert with a snarl, while I, in accordance with the best precedents, returned, with outward calm, to the unexpired portion of the thermos. Well, we had, at least, located the strength of the opposition.

An hour later our camp followers arrived, about twenty of them. They were a motley crowd, and it didn't look to me much as if they liked the job. I don't blame them. I told them to collect munitions, and, at my signal, to raise, with one voice, a tumult as of Ephesus, and hurl their stones into the covert. I, myself, went with the two gun-bearers to a flank, and the leader of the porters, a self-appointed dignitary, a one-eyed, half-witted individual, known in the camp as "Goi-Goi," was placed to watch the other side. The signal was given. The Acholi, under the direction of Chongu, yelled *fortissimo*, and hurled their stones, what time I gripped my rifle and, left foot

SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

slightly forward, faced all the lions of Africa in the heroic pose of a War Memorial.

Nothing happened for five minutes, and then suddenly I saw the Acholi join shoulder to shoulder and thus, Goi-Goi urging encouragement, plunge into the woods. Step by step they advanced, stabbing with their spears, and at each stab they let out a piercing yell. I was dumbfounded. I had expected any *dénouement* but this. Obviously I had underrated the Acholi. Of Massai spear-hunts, I had heard ; but that the Acholi should thus willingly put their hand into the cockatrice den seemed to me to be more than passing strange. Still there was no time to sit and think about it. If the lion was there, he might be on top of one of them at any moment. I ran round and joined the phalanx. I did not want to have to explain the death of one of my porters to the local D.C. Thus and thus with chant and goose-step did we work through that thicket, and never the sign of lion or lioness did we see. Then, and only then, did I realize what had happened. The Acholi had stayed where they were till Goi-Goi had viewed the lions away on his side of the covert. He had let them get clear, and then, hoping to find favour, they had given their Buffalo Bill exhibition, while every care was taken to prevent my getting a shot at the lion before it got away. I have not been blessed with the gift of tongues, yet I think, before our disgruntled party started to wind its way back to camp, I made it clear to all that, like Queen Victoria, I was not amused.

Well, that was the end of the last day. The next

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

morning I had to march in twelve miles to a waiting car, and then motor some fifty more. We were as irrevocably united to those movements as Atlas to the Globe. Still, by sending on the porters, and starting very early, we could just fit in a half-morning's hunt. Simba and Kaula were delighted. Chongu, sighing sensibly for the fleshpots of his home, was certain that we had frightened all the lions of the world away into Kenya—or was it Abyssinia?

Nevertheless, dawn found us setting out, and a distant grunting told of one lone last lingerer, at least, who was not seeking sanctuary with Saile Selaissie (on whom be peace!). We hastened after him, but always the grunts seemed to be another two hills ahead (the native calculates distance by hills), and as the light increased to day, they ceased altogether. Rather forlorn, increasingly listless, we pressed on. Kob there were in plenty, and, here and there, a water-buck, but never the sign of a lion, not even the cold comfort of yesterday's spoor. It was nine o'clock; that was the last moment of the extra grace that I had allowed myself. At nine o'clock I turned for home, unless I have actually seen the lion. That was what I had promised my conscience, and I am a man of my word. It would be so easy to extend it by another half-hour, and then two half-hours, and so on to infinity. Camp, therefore, was the order.

And no sooner had I said the words than the incredible happened. Nobody will believe me, but still it is a fact, so I must record it. It was at that very moment that there, across the valley, I saw a

“BEAR” OPERATIONS

vulture settle in a tree. I pulled out my glasses and looked. There were half a dozen vultures in the tree, sitting like stockbrokers over the ticker, remote, cynical, full of vulturine bonhomie, but ready to swoop. Where there are vultures there is something to eat, something that is not infrequently a lion kill. And when those vultures are sitting like stockbrokers in a tree, you may be certain that the lion himself is on the kill. I pointed this out to Simba. His interest was of the polite but rather academic form. Kaula, though he grasped the importance of the vultures, was not very hopeful. Chongu was positively chilling. However, it was excuse enough for me to disregard conscience, and I set off. Hardly had we started than the vultures swept out of the tree, and descended on to the kill below. “Bear” operations of some magnitude appeared to be taking place!

It was obvious that the lions had just left the kill. Things were becoming interesting. We hurried on. There was the kill. Two fat water-buck, more or less demolished, with the vultures ravening on top of them, and there, leading from it, was the spoor of a whole pride of lions. It was easy to follow in the wet grass, and I set off along it as quickly as I could. From behind came a clash of bolts as a cartridge went home into each breech.

The spoor took us along the course of a stream-bed, full of rushes, which we followed for about a quarter of a mile. Then, suddenly rounding a bend, I saw a lion, evidently the rear-guard of the pride, standing broadside on with his gaze fixed upon us. He was, perhaps, 130 yards off, and though

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

not a difficult shot, it was no easy one, as he stood against a yellow background of dry grass, belly-high in undergrowth. Slowly I raised my rifle. This time I would do or die. My calm was steely. I would not miss. I drew the bead, found his heart, wavered and came to rest for a moment. At that moment I could *feel* the agony behind. Up again, and this time I had him. I knew it, and he went down a tumble of kicking yellow. With a cry of triumph, Simba rushed forward; Kaula, with more sense, called him back, while I, rifle at the ready, advanced upon the violently agitated grass. Twenty seconds later we were on the spot, but our lion had gone. We could hear him growling in the bed of the stream. I sent Kaula up a tree to see if he could see him, but, before he could get there, we could hear the lion making off up the hill with wheezy grunts. Had he escaped us? Had I made a mess of it again? The prospect was really insupportable. Here it was, by all the rules of a game I knew only too well, that I should have sat tight for half an hour and let his wounds stiffen. But, with an escaping lion before me, and the distant motor a good seventeen behind me, prudence went by the wind. That, says the reader severely, sitting in his armchair on the shady side of Pall Mall, is the way accidents happen. I plead guilty.

Slowly we descended the stream. Slowly we climbed to the other bank, while up the hill the gruntings died away to nothing. As we topped the bank we found in front of us a sea of high, thick elephant grass, through which the lions had made a

THE WIDOWED LIONESS

definite tunnel. For all we knew, that belt extended from there to the Congo. With three pairs of eyes behind inquiring what I would do next, there was no choice. I had not the courage to turn back. I plunged into the high grass. That is called the white man's burden. But it was a very nasty moment, and there were whole litters of foxes gnawing at my vitals. After about ten yards the elephant grass, to my infinite relief, suddenly ended, and we found ourselves in thick stuff up to our middles ; unpleasant enough but, by comparison, like frisking in Kensington Gardens. We advanced for eighty yards and there the path forked. It was fifty-fifty, and I went right. Another hundred yards and, from behind a bush not twenty yards away, there was a menacing growl. In front, impenetrable undergrowth. I waited. Another growl. From behind, a warning hiss. I glanced quickly back. There, twenty yards behind and to the flank, was Chongu. He was pointing in front.

Slowly I moved off to the right, and then I, too, could see ; for there, through a gap in the undergrowth, a little open oval which exactly fitted her head as if she were posed all ready for Mr. Marcus-well Maxwell to come along and snap her, was the lioness. My eyes met hers. They were pale and expressionless, rather vacant, indeed : we each held the glance of the other for five, for, perhaps, ten seconds. And I waited for the charge which seemed to me inevitable. Slowly I raised my rifle, infinitely slowly, less it should provoke the charge before I was absolutely ready. And then in a moment of

LAST-MINUTE LUCK

time she whisked round and disappeared. It was just the quickest thing that ever was seen. There was not a tremor of the bushes, not the rustle of a leaf. She evidently had thought better of it.

Simba, patently disappointed at this outcome, followed off after the spoor. I went with him for a hundred yards and then stopped him. Even if I had mistaken my original lioness for a lion that was not my beast. When one has been knocked flat by a .375 magnum by Holland, one does not skip away like that. So I returned to the place where the tracks had forked, and took the alternative route. We had not gone ten yards before we found a heavy blood-track about heart-level high on the grass edging the track. As they say in "hunt the thimble," we were getting warm. Slowly, more slowly than ever, I advanced, when suddenly from behind there was a yell of triumph, and Kaula pushed past me. I followed. There, in front, lay my lion—dead. A beautiful, full-grown male, who proved to be over nine foot between pegs, and with as fine a tawny orange mane as one could wish for. He was shot about three inches behind the heart. Moral—a little far forward is better than a little far back.

Then, in the reaction from twenty very trying minutes, the four of us danced half demented round the dead lion, clasped each other by the hand, felt the monarch's whiskers, tugged his mane, and marched about his corpse, each singing his own private and unintelligible *jubilate*.

Of the march home—seventeen miles with one short halt—of the night journey by car down the

COULEUR DE ROSE

worst road in Africa, of the stories told by Chongu of our prowess (very much including himself in the "our") at every village we passed, of the midnight removal of the headskin under a hurricane lamp that passed all understanding, I cannot enlarge here ; they only served to lend colour to a roseate atmosphere in which a dentist's drill would have been a pleasure. For had not the luck changed at the very moment when I was about to turn and explain a shaming failure to my friends, for the first and, I doubt not, the last time in a shooting career.

CHAPTER VI

CUPS WITHHELD

MY last chapter dealt with last-minute luck—when fortune favoured, but in this one I will tell the cruellest story of last-minute luck that I know. The story is true, more than the usual “founded on fact,” but I have sufficiently altered names and places to prevent the knife turning unduly in a wound that must still be green. In this case the cups which fortune withheld were those of a fourteen - pointer. Hugh Wapshot (great-great-grandson of Thackeray's Sir Giles) was one of the first of the younger shikaris in India, and a pillar of that renowned corps, the Fortieth Fusiliers. He had twice reached the semi-final heats of the Kadir, and he had led their polo team to victory in the Infantry Cup. He was, indeed, a Bahadur, as the saying is. He had shot almost every species of big game to be killed in the ancient land of Hindustan, but his real triumphs were reserved for the Himalayas. Did not his 45-inch ammon from the Changchemno, his 56-inch Pir Panjal Markhor and his 47-inch ibex from the Shyok adorn the walls of the mess of the Fortieth, proudest of regiments of the line, to make his prowess clear to all men?

Reginald Crawley Raggles (strangely enough the great-great-grandson of Colonel Rawdon Crawley's

A HOT WEATHER INCIDENT

unfortunate landlord) was an ornament of the Carbolic Rifles, a regiment at that time less highly thought of than its past services deserved. He was, unfortunately, not a sportsman, and had inherited from his ancestor that fine eye for a good bottle of port, which had once made the stewards' room at Queens Crawley so favoured a port of call for the gentlemen's gentlemen of the county of Southampton. His chief triumphs were alcoholic. He played no games ; he was a votary of no sport. Truth to tell, judging by the standards of the ordinary Englishman, he was not a very pleasant specimen. In due course the Finger of Fate began to point. The mills of God grind slowly, and the fulcra that fortune uses for the movement of her greatest levers are often very small : nevertheless, when they begin to move the mountains do indeed travail. The very small fulcrum which set this particular tragedy in motion was the red pepper in a prairie oyster. It was, as it were, the pistol pulled on the Archduke. It was a farewell dance in the Khanpur Club at the end of March, a farewell to sweethearts and wives who were making their way to the hills during the hot weather. As anybody who knows their India realizes, it doesn't take very much to make an excuse for one more jaded festivity in any Indian station : " weeks " which prolong themselves indefinitely throughout the cold weather till they seem to have solved the problem of perpetual motion.

On this occasion prairie oysters were being prepared at 4 a.m. for the resuscitation of the jaded, and the dispersion of the gathering clouds of alcoholic

CUPS WITHHELD

remorse. Need I say that Reginald Raggles was the champion mixer of prairie oysters in all Khanpur? Nobody could handle a bottle of Worcester Sauce and the yolk of an egg with quite the same verve as he. Had his talents in that direction been taken to the hill, Rowland Ward would have had to have brought out a new edition of his book. Now Reginald disliked the facile success of Hugh Wapshott: he was everything that he, Raggles, was not. He resented him: he resented his success. Into Hugh's prairie oyster he inserted enough cayenne pepper to choke an infantry battalion: certainly the Fortieth Fusiliers nearly lost their adjutant, while Raggles and others of his ilk laughed long and loud at his discomfiture.

That started it. And then the fraying tempers that come with the hot weather, the irritation over trifles, the loss of proportion and perspective, the sense of ever-ready grievance did the rest. A harsh word from Reggie to Hugh's favourite syce: an aspersion cast on the efficiency of the Fortieth sentries when Reggie was inspecting the garrison guards—a Fortieth sentry slovenly!—and a curt refusal on the part of Hugh to join a little poker school one evening (“stuck-up prig”), all helped to make matters worse, and ill-concealed dislike gave place to open enmity.

However, towards the end of the hot weather Hugh went off to shoot in Cashmere, and in the soft greenness of that enchanted valley all these annoyances were soon forgotten. Floating on the Jhelum in a houseboat, with the mulberries on the banks gently moving in the breeze, and parting to show

OVER THE KILLICK

a distant view of the snow-capped Kaj-i-Naj, while he munched fresh apricots and peaches proffered by small children whose little bodies were bronzed like the amorini of an English rose-garden, Hugh felt that the plains of India seemed remarkably far away, and Reginald Crawley Raggles indefinitely remote.

With Razak Khan, his shikari now on four separate trips, Hugh was making for the Tagdumbash Pamir, having after infinite labour and a three years' correspondence obtained permission from the Government of India to cross the Killick Pass and shoot an Ovis Poli on the High Pamirs. It was to be, this Poli, the crowning glory of his collection, the seal on his fame as a Himalayan shikari, and for a whole year he had thought of little else. Unfortunately, till quite recently (I believe the official view is now somewhat altered) the Government had resolutely set their face against visitors to Central Asia crossing the Killick. There were not enough of transport and supply in that region to manage to provide for touring officials and the mission in Kashgar. No other visitors could be permitted. In vain did Hugh plead that he would travel with but six ponies, in vain did he add that he would take all his own supplies. He even persuaded a reasonably minded member of the intelligence branch at Army Headquarters to suggest that the report brought back by so promising a young officer would be of great use. It was of no avail. *Roma locuta* and that was the end of it.

Fortunately for Hugh, an Exalted Excellency noticed his riding in the Kadir Cup: enquired what relation he was to the present Sir Giles: had known his

CUPS WITHHELD

grandfather well in Hampshire: had fagged for him at Eton: and invited him on to the Royal Elephant to explain the progress of the final heats to him and his Exalted Consort. Hugh laid siege at once; and with that knowledge that Exalted Excellencies sometimes have that here was somebody they would be pleased to invite to 237 Belgrave Square on their return home, and not just another young man on whom they ought to expend the regulation amount of their world-famous graciousness and charm, they warmed to him in earnest. ("No wonder Kipling called this the paradise of the middle classes, my dear. However, they enjoy it all so, and we never go to Cheltenham.") Hugh seized his chance, and in a surprisingly short time his papers were through. Officials, however highly placed, seldom argue with Kings or the representatives of Kings. And so as he looked back two days after he had left Srinagar from the summit of the Randiangan Pass over the vale of Cashmere the future seemed very bright. The minor worries of life were all forgotten, and even his hatred of Reggie Raggles, which a week earlier had been a raging phobia in his bosom, was stilled.

The next two months were days of constant and strenuous hard work. To start with, they had only a comparatively limited time at their disposal, and they had to make all possible haste. The Astor route to Gilgit is a very well-organized one, and it is almost always possible to obtain ponies on it. Moreover, double marching or treble marching sounds ridiculously easy in cold print, if one is riding—at any rate part of the way—and if one's ponies are not

HUNZA AND NAGA

too heavily loaded, it is easy enough to cover thirty miles in a day. But when one covers thirty miles a day for ten days it becomes quite another matter. The strain on the servants becomes daily greater, for if one arrives in at sunset and starts again at sunrise one must add two hours at each end of the day for their work. After a week boxes need repacking, loads re-adjusting, food replenishing, and so, on their arrival at Gilgit, they were glad of two days' rest. Old Razak Khan was imperturbable as ever, but the cook and the camp coolie (all some sort of relations, for Cashmere is a hot-bed of Nepotism), who shared a riding pony between them, were both going a little short.

The next day they were off again in increasing cold. It had been positively sultry in the Indus Valley under Nanga Purbat, whose sublime heights had suddenly sprung up upon them with staggering unexpectedness as they rounded a corner of the road, and Hugh was glad of his windproof clothing from Burberry's. They passed Hunza and Naga and duly left India for the nominal territory of China. There are no Poli in India—or almost none, though for many years the Mir of Hunza has been protecting a herd of ewes which live in his domain. For a number of years the rams have crossed over to them from Turkestan in the rut, but now, I believe, they have permanently joined the herd.

We will not follow Hugh to the Tagdumbash, nor through the five weeks he spent in high Pamir. Good Poli are not easy to come by to-day. Apart from the hunting nomads they are a prey to wolves,

CUPS WITHHELD

and the ones that fall the easiest victims are those that are weighed down by a heavy head. Lying on the ground they saw any number of fine trophies, but though the rut was about to begin and the rams were with the ewes it was not till he had looked over the herds in four separate valleys that he saw one that he considered shootable. In three weeks he had shot heads of forty-eight and fifty-one inches and then he had one of those blinding pieces of luck, which after all the hard work of the last six weeks was really no less than his due.

Coming home rather early to camp one afternoon they spied five Poli on the ridge between them and their camp. They were not more than a thousand yards away, and at the first glance through their glasses James and Razak Khan knew that they had seen what they had come to look for. The wind was with them, as far as the changing winds of the Pamir are ever with anybody, and the Poli were coming slowly down the ridge in their direction. It was clear to Hugh that it was all too good to be true. However, it was not. Within an hour they were behind a boulder not more than 150 yards from the big Poli. His horns were more splendid even than they had first thought. The final twist turned out and up at right angles to his head. But Hugh did not stop to admire them, nor Razak Khan to discourse on their beauty. Even that imperturbable old man (the only shikari in Cashmere, Hugh used to say, who had never over-estimated a head, and to whom the hissed appeal of "*Maro Sahib*" was completely alien) showed a trifle of nervousness.

AUGUST CONGRATULATIONS

But Hugh made no mistake. Dead as mutton was very literally true of that Poli.

He measured sixty-one inches, and as they were not likely ever to see a better, Hugh turned for home. At the telegraph post at the foot of the Killich he despatched a wire to the August Personage already referred to, and the gracious reply (bearing priority over all other messages) which waited him on arrival at Gilgit assured him of the respect of everybody in the station. A week he spent in one of the Astor nallahs looking for markhor—he wanted a really typical Astor head to complete his group from Quetta, the Kaj-i-Naj and Baltistan—and having shot a very passable specimen of forty-nine inches he made all haste back to Gurais where he and Razak Khan were determined to crown their expedition by shooting a really good barasingh. For though he had shot two barasingh on his first expedition to Cashmere, a ten-pointer of thirty-nine inches and an eleven-pointer of forty inches, neither of them satisfied his ideals on the subject. Since then he had not bothered very much with the game of Cashmere proper. He associated the Sind and the Liddar Valleys too much with encampments of elegant gentlemen, out from Srinagar with their equally elegant ladies to do a little polite camping. He-men like Hugh felt crabbed and constrained till they had crossed the Zogi La.

Razak Khan was not too optimistic of their chances when they reached Gurais. There had been an early fall of snow on the hills above, and although in the valley itself there was still harvesting and autumn

CUPS WITHHELD

flowers and the patching of drying apricots, there was a sharp enough nip in the air to get the deer on the move into their winter quarters in the Cashmere valley. Moreover the two best nallahs at the head of the valley were already occupied, the one by a colonel of Indian cavalry and the other by a visiting American who had just returned despite the late season of the year from an expedition to Baltistan over the Deosai plains, which even in early October can be one of the bleakest places in the world. However, the next day they moved up into the pinewoods on to the watershed which separated the valley of the Gurais river from that of the Jhelum. They camped among the trees, in a spot ideally sheltered, in the log cabins of the mountain shepherds, but their luck, which up to that moment had been ideal, now seemed to have deserted them. On the first day out they saw two small barasingh with half a dozen hinds, but nothing in any way approaching the sort of heads they wanted, and after that nothing more for four days. Never once did they hear the call of a stag, whose note in earlier years, so Razak Khan assured Hugh, had made the valley seem alive.

With only four days more of their leave left the stags began to move again and one night they heard them calling in the pinewoods. The next day they followed them up on to the open ground above the forest, right up on to the divide which separated the two watersheds. The two stags and their hinds were travelling fast. It was quite clear that Hugh's nallah was merely their *pied à terre* in Paris *en route* from London to the south of France. Under any circum-

A FRUITLESS SEARCH

stances they were but indifferent heads, an eight and ten-pointer, and as they saw them outlined against the skyline before they descended on the other side of the hill, they began to feel hopeless. There was no time now to hurry back over the Randiangan Pass and try again in the Sind or Liddar Valleys, and they cursed themselves for having turned aside from those favoured hunting grounds for the sake of a few extra marches. After all, when one has thrown one's show over the Tagdumbash Pamir, a little diversion of a couple of days beyond Srinagar is nothing. They were going to have to report failure. And Hugh, no less jealous of his reputation than other good shikaris, was not too pleased at that. A blank shot might be all very well for the Raggles of this world, but not to the scion of the House of Wapshott, already publicly congratulated by the exalted for his prowess as a big-game shot.

As a counsel of despair Hugh suggested hiring coolies and trekking direct over the watershed into Cashmere. It was true that it would entail a great deal of *bandobast*, but after all if the deer were doing so it was surely the best thing to follow suit. But Razak Khan, good shikari that he was, was as averse to novelty as any other Indian. It was customary to return to Cashmere via Bandapore. There would be no food on the other side of the ridge, or coolies, or shelters. It was impossible. And Hugh, a little shaken in his own judgment by a fortnight's failure, deferred to his opinion. There was considerable calling again that night. At dawn next morning Razak Khan entered Hugh's tent and woke him.

CUPS WITHHELD

“Listen, Sahib,” he said. In the pinewoods just above the camp a stag was roaring—and that great bass was the call of no ordinary stag. Hugh had a “hunch”; his proverbial luck was in. This was the monarch of this particular glen. An hour later they were out on the hillside and far above them on the open slopes was a stag and six hinds travelling—travelling on at a steady pace towards the divide. They were following the track worn by other stags before them, through the covering of snow. They soon paused and cropped at the grass and Hugh was able to unship the telescope. And then he vowed a vow that he would kill that stag or put away his rifles for ever. It had every attribute, that head, which a stag’s head should have—length and span and beam and symmetry. Brow, bez and trez stood out like curved daggers, and above them rose two almost even cups of four points each. It was, indeed, a head to be proud of, to dream of. Not an inch less than forty-five inches, thought Hugh. Razak Khan said nothing. His heart was too full to speak. There was no time to go back to camp for the tiffin coolie, for that stag was travelling and had to be followed. They set off in his pursuit, ready to go on till he or they dropped.

The hill was open and their first plan was to make a fairly wide detour which would bring them above the deer some 1,000 feet below the summit. It was little use pursuing direct as the wind was blowing straight towards the quarry and there was practically no cover. But they could only hope to work round him by making the best of good going, and if the

THE VISION GLORIOUS

deer lingered. However, they set off. Hugh was wearing the heavy clothes he had put on in the icy blast of dawn, and now, as they pressed up higher, and had to push their way through snow and slush, fit as he was, he almost felt that all this pother was too much for the slaying of one four-footed thing.

By two o'clock they reached their vantage-point. If the stags had not passed them, they must come within a hundred yards of where they lay. Slowly they crawled forward to the edge of the hillock behind which they were sheltering, and looked over. They could see right down the valley to where their camp lay at the head of the pinewoods. Down away in the distance there was the thin curl of smoke of their fire, and as they watched through their glasses Hugh saw one of the coolies moving down to the stream with a petrol tin to draw water. But no deer. They crept back and moved to where they could get a view of the hillside above. They were just too late. The deer were about five hundred yards in front of them. They had halted and were looking back. They had obviously got their wind. This time they got a good view of the stag. He stood with his great antlers outlined against the white snow behind. It was a sight that would have moved the merest novice : to Hugh it was the vision glorious. But just as he was beginning to hug the thought that perhaps after all they would be able to make a stalk of it, the hinds trotted off, one by one, up the hillside, and the stag turned and followed them. For twenty minutes they watched them till they topped

CUPS WITHHELD

the sky-line—against which the monster looked positively gigantic—and disappeared.

Hugh turned to Razak Khan. It was then two o'clock and they had, perhaps, three and a half hours in which it was possible to shoot effectively. If they turned back they would quite obviously never see those stags again. If they followed them over the watershed there was just a chance that they would. It would certainly mean that they would not get back that night: possibly it would mean that they would be out on the hillside all night, but it was worth it. Accordingly they pressed on to the summit. They found on reaching the top, about an hour and a half later, that the tree-level was much higher on the Jhelum side of the watershed than it was on the Gurais side. And as they reached the summit and turned their glasses eagerly below they saw two hinds just disappearing into the trees; but whether or not it was "their" hinds they could not say. Still they followed on in the tracks the deer had made, till they reached the tree-line, and as they did so they heard the great stag roaring not half a mile away. Having filched the Bathshebas of Gurais King David was now busy trying to add to his harem at the expense of his brethren of Cashmere.

But it was almost dusk now and it was hopeless to go on. Accordingly they made their way down through the trees till they found a deserted shepherd's cabin. Outside they lit a gigantic fire of logs, and within they made beds of pine branches, and having supped off two very unappetizing chapatis that Razak Khan produced out of his pocket, they lay down to

A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

sleep. "He will not go far," said Razak Khan. "They, too, have journeyed all day. Like us they rest." And so they lay down to sleep.

There is nothing to delay one at dawn if one's bed is uncomfortable and one's breakfast non-existent, and so at half-past six next morning they were out in the woods again. The wind was still blowing from the same quarter, which meant that if the deer were lower down the hill they would immediately move on: so they agreed to make another long detour to try and get below them. The valley in which they now were was the narrow head of a main tributary to the Sind. It was steep and thickly wooded, and stalking was far less easy than it would have been on the open hillside they had left on the other side of the divide. Their chief hope lay in the stag beginning to call again. If that failed, they could only place themselves across the main track that moving deer were likely to travel on, and hope to cut them off. So down they went into the woods, picking their way silently over the pine-needles, their eyes moving this way and that for a chance view. Both of them by now knew it was pretty well hopeless, but they felt in honour bound to go on till they dropped. After all, this was their last day for hunting, and even so that would run the journey back to Srinagar pretty fine.

Then suddenly up above them in the forest a stag roared. Not a stag, but *the* stag, for there could be no mistaking that majestic note. Hope rushed back through their veins. Forgotten in a second were the discomforts of the night: forgotten in a second

CUPS WITHHELD

the aching void beneath their belts : the luck *had* turned. They were at that moment about 500 yards from the stream that rushed down from the head of the watershed, dividing the valley. On either side of this valley there was a gap in the forest of about a hundred yards wide, down which ran the path used by deer and such wandering shepherds as mounted to those heights. It was almost certain that the stag would move down this path. They hurried forward to the edge of the trees, and cautiously looked up the hill.

There, 500 yards higher up, was the stag and his hinds. They were cropping leisurely at such tufts of grass as they could find by the banks of the stream, and moving slowly downhill. Once or twice the stag would stop to give a roar of warning or of invitation, but in general he seemed fairly contented with his half-dozen hinds. They were heading straight towards Hugh and Razak Khan, and in another quarter of an hour they would be upon them. And the wind was perfect ! Hugh snuggled down against the rock behind which they were concealed, pushed forward a rest for his rifle, wriggled himself into a comfortable position and sighted on a rock just 120 yards away. Now whatever happens, he thought to himself, don't shoot too soon. The Lord has delivered him into our hands. It is a moment for patience.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed and a stag came on slowly but surely. Hugh, with his rifle pushed out before him, kept his eye firmly fixed on the stag. Once he thought he saw a movement up there on

TOO LATE!

the other side of the nallah, and once a stone came hurtling down into the bed of the stream, but, apart from that, the deer came on step by step, while everything else in the forest was silent and motionless. Three hundred, two hundred and fifty, two hundred —there was a bare fifty yards to go, and the stag seemed vaster and more royal than ever. Hugh grasped his rifle the tighter and took a preliminary sight.

As he did so there was a movement from Razak Khan, and at that very moment a shot rang out across the valley. The great stag lurched forward, steadied himself, and galloped madly down the hill for twenty yards till he fell forward, and slid and slithered to the foot of that very rock which Hugh had calculated to be his grave-stone. Slowly, bewildered, sick at heart, and hardly able to grasp the extent of the calamity, they straightened themselves up. And as they did so there hurried from the woods above the triumphant figure of a Sahib and his shikari. There had been two parties stalking the one stag, and Hugh and Razak Khan were two minutes too late!

All the aching bones and the empty stomach came back with a rush. He walked towards the prostrate stag while the other party began gingerly to cross over the stream above. Hugh gazed at the stag in a daze. It was all and more than all he had expected. It was probably the best barasingh that had been shot in Cashmere for ten years. As regards symmetry and beauty of form the head was as good probably as any that ever would be shot. Then he looked up

CUPS WITHHELD

the hill at the successful sportsman. It was Reggie Raggles! He approached with jaunty step. He was far too pleased with himself to recall ancient animosities. "It's quite a good head, isn't it?" he said.

I will draw a veil over the bitterness of the next half-hour. Hugh said nothing—not even when Reggie maliciously remarked, "We wondered what you were doing in our nallah," and refusing all offers of food (for Reggie's camp was barely a mile away) he was led sorrowfully away by Razak Khan. That worthy's Izzat was the more blackened when he found that their rival's shikari was one of the worst type of Cashmere shikaris, a man only just able to get a licence from the "Major Sahib," and known to be up to every sort of knavery. "Hardly able," as Razak Khan pathetically remarked, "to distinguish between a barasingh and a musk deer." Reggie, it appeared, had been spending two months' leave in Gulmarg. Unfortunately, he had unsuccessfully plied his suit with the lady of the Collector of Boggle-Wallah, and, after the approved pattern, had gone off to shoot big game. He had got himself to the top of the Sind Valley, and there he had stuck. He had shot nothing—that was intelligible—and he was becoming heartily bored with the whole business. Indeed, he had decided to return to Srinagar that day. Fortunately for him no coolies could be mobilized in time, and so to avoid the boredom of camp he had set off with his shikari up the hill, and suddenly emerged from the forest only fifty yards from the great stag. He had, of course, no ideas about

THE GREEN WOUND

the comparative value of barasingh heads, but this one certainly looked very fine, and even he could hardly miss that gigantic beast at fifty yards.

At the top of the divide Hugh and Razak Khan met their camp coolie who had set out before dawn to pursue them with provender. They boiled tea and ate a copious meal before they made their way slowly back to camp. They did not speak: the iron had entered into their souls. Razak Khan had been with many Sahibs who had been first-class shikaris. He knew that there were some things too deep for words. Neither he nor James ever referred to the matter again.

But, of course, the story got out. Within a month it was all over Khanpur, with embellishments. It was certainly an amusing one to all save the principal participants in the tragedy, and it lost nothing in the telling. And when the officers of the Fortieth dined with the Carbolics, Reggie's brother officers made a point of taking them out to see a splendid barasingh just back from Van Ingen.

CHAPTER VII

FIRST HEADS

I HAVE discoursed at some length in previous chapters on the urge that sends men big-game shooting and the motives that influence the best type of big-game shot, but that has not covered one question which I heard being most hotly debated not more than a week before I wrote this. Does a man go to shoot a record head, or does he go for the sake of the stalk, no matter what the head? There are two schools of thought. The one says the thing that matters is the collection of a first-class specimen —you may stalk and look over hundreds of heads, but you must never pull the trigger till you feel pretty certain that this particular one represents something better than your best. The other school of thought says that one should not go round the world pot-hunting. The stalk's the thing. A long and thrilling hunt after a small head is of far greater importance than to collect a very fine specimen possibly some three minutes away from camp and without difficulty. To the contending parties one weakly suggests, as Eden between Ribenthrop and Flandin, that the ideal is the good stalk after the good head. Whereupon, they both very properly turn and revile you.

Of course, the truth lies somewhere between the

PATIENCE REWARDED

two. The better than your best doctrine is a perfectly sound one and has prevented much unnecessary slaughter. The stalk's the thing theory is equally admirable. Nobody wants to hang something on a wall just because it is large. It would be quite easy to fatten up a record head in any park or enclosure and then go out and shoot it. Personal taste and predilection must find a reasonable half-way house between the two, and in big-game shooting, as in all other sports dependent on nature, it is impossible to lay down very exact rules of procedure or conduct. Nature is not a calculable entity and cannot be compassed by precise formulæ.

I once took the trouble to find out how a certain number of actual record heads came to be shot, and certainly the story made good telling. In quite a reasonable percentage of cases the killing was pure luck. The stalker did not know he was shooting a record or anything like it. In a number of other cases the head was bagged without difficulty and almost unexpectedly. I am referring now to the actual individual record head. It would be hardly fair to give names, facts and figures, because I and a good many other people would not mind seeing our name at the head of the list in Rowland Ward's book, even if the specimen in question was bagged from the bathroom window. Of course, there are many more cases where the head was bagged after long days of strenuous hard work. I like to think of Bayly-Worthington, who journeyed half across the world for a big ibex in the Thian Shan. He got several nice heads, and a view of one positive monster,

FIRST HEADS

at which he was never able to get a shot. The next year he returned again, all that six months' trip to find a head that probably wasn't there, that had hurried off to another nallah, or had been pulled down by wolves. He found his head and shot it. It is still fourth or fifth in Rowland Ward's list. That is an achievement to satisfy any critic.

But I doubt if there was ever a record head shot after however great exertions that gave quite the same thrill as the first heads of our early experience. Strictly speaking, a first head is, I suppose, any new specimen one ever shoots. If I was to go and shoot a bongo to-morrow—and in the distant to-morrow it will not be my fault if I do not—that would be a first head. But I mean those heads with the shooting of which we gained our first experience. I have a collection of them. They hang on the stairs of my home in London. For many years they were confined to a cellar by an unsympathetic family. Big-game trophies have no place in a flat—I am quite prepared to subscribe to that opinion. Nor are they of any interest except to the man that shot them; that is another point of which I am more or less certain. However, a wall that looked both bare and bleak and big seemed to afford a little friendly hospitality, and so, despite the derisive groans of all save him who shot them, up they went.

On the right we begin with my first red deer, and above that is my first ibex. On the other side of the wall are my first oorial and, above it, my first Japanese deer. Between them are my first roe and my first, and only, chamois, which as the fruit of

WATER RATS . . .

riper years can hardly be called a first head. I look on them with a kindling affection. Of my friends, the great majority are just bored ; the knowing few when they view their modest dimensions are condescending. Yet not all the inches of Jack the Giant Killer could have made up for the first fine careless rapture that those heads brought me. I only wish I could add to their number the pelt of the first thing I ever shot with a rifle, or, indeed, with any weapon, a water-rat.

That occasion burns no less brightly in my memory because of the humble origin of the principal actor in the drama. I had been given a .22 rifle by my god-father, and on a Sunday afternoon of the Easter holidays my father took me for a walk along the banks of the Wear, seeking what we might devour. Suddenly I noticed a water-rat preening on the bank about twenty yards away. But as I jerked up my rifle he slipped off into the water. "Bad luck," said my father, and prepared to move on. Not so me. I remained rooted to the spot, hoping that he was but the first of as many water-rats as ever breasted the Weiser. Nor was I without my reward, for he swam back to land perhaps ten yards higher up, where I slew him. Inwardly, my spirits soared to heaven, but, outwardly, I preserved a steely calm. I had not stood with the guns on many scores of occasions for nothing, and seen pheasants and partridges and rabbits laid out in orderly rows for the game cart. I knew the comparative value of a vulgar water-rat. I turned it over with my toe. Actually, the gesture was one of incredulous delight. Out-

FIRST HEADS

wardly, it signified contempt. "Would you like to take it home?" said my father, an understanding man. "No," said I, thinking it was a poor sort of thing to keep compared to the pheasants I would be shooting in a year or two. And that is how the pelt fails to occupy a position that I would now willingly accord it.

I remember, too, the aftermath to that story. On the way home in the gathering dusk I spied a large bird on the bough. "Where?" said my father. "What is it?" "A pigeon," I answered positively. "All right," he said, "shoot it." It was the Easter holidays, but still pigeons are a nuisance, and I was very young. I fired, and a cock pheasant croaked indignantly off through the woods. This matter, I remember, was not referred to on my return home. As I have said, my father was a very understanding man.

I did not, as many more fortunate boys have done before me, and I hope are still doing, shoot my first stag till after I had grown up. The first proper full-grown beast that I shot was a Punjaub oorial in the Salt Hills north of Rawal Pindi, and I think of all the animals I have shot that one gave me the greatest thrill I have ever had in my life. I remember that before I shot it I was dead tired and dispirited to a degree, yet a few seconds after I was in the seventh heaven of delight. For the first and only time in my life I knew, on the march home to camp, what was meant by the expression "walking on air." For a matter of fact there is no better place in the world in which to gain one's first experience of stalking than the Salt Hills. The country is wild

enough to give the necessary sense of adventure, and accessible enough to prevent even the most inexperienced having a fiasco as regards transport and supplies. It is not difficult stalking, but if one fails to follow the elementary rules of spying, studying the wind, and of a cautious approach, one will meet with disaster. The quarry, too, is definitely imposing. It gives a worth-while feeling to the whole expedition, and viewed through glasses the horns sometimes seem very big indeed. A good oorial should be thirty inches or more, though his cousin, the Sharpu of Baltistan and Ladak, may be shot when an inch or two shorter. The plain, undeviating twist of his horns offers little variation, and so once the novice has assured himself that his head has the final upward twist, he should not be chagrined by shooting an undersized head. I think it is to my early adventures with oorial that I owe the allegiance that I pay, *facile princeps*, to the sheep family, on which I have enlarged elsewhere. Some of the happiest days of a life which, take it by and large, has been very happy, were spent in those Salt Hills.

I have written elsewhere of Mahomed Khan, my shikari. He taught me a lot about stalking, and he was, in addition, the only Indian shikari I have ever met whose sense of humour would go more than half-way with mine. And my first oorial was shot on the first day I had with him. At dawn we had been out on that narrow scrub-covered line of hills which lies across the plain between Fatehjang and Hassan Abdal. In winter when the sun has risen to warm one it is an ideal stalking ground. In summer,

FIRST HEADS

I believe, those bare rocks become one of the hottest places on earth. Soon after we had started I spied our first oorial. I always think that to see *something*, no matter what its age or sex, is half the battle with a budding shikari.

We actually saw three very small rams, but, to me, they had not only four legs but horns—it was enough, my trigger finger positively itched. Mahomed Khan was very much diverted, but he restrained me. This, he said after the manner of Mr. Wells, is only a foretaste of Things to Come. To me it seemed the Anatomy of Frustration. We went on down the hillside, and at about ten o'clock he showed me, 300 yards away on the hillside, a herd of about six oorial; and one of them seemed very big. Breathless with excitement, quivering with anticipatory fevers, I followed in Mahomed Khan's footsteps as we crept forward from rock to rock, every stone displaced seeming an avalanche, and every breaking twig a cannon shot. When we were within about 150 yards of the oorial, which were feeding below us, Mahomed Khan gave me the nearest approach to a leer that that venerable follower of the Prophet was capable of achieving. "They're going to get more than they bargained for," he seemed to say. His attitude towards the whole thing seemed to me always to be a gigantic apple-pie bed contest between us and the oorial.

I remember quite well that I was quivering with excitement as I raised my glasses to look at the quarry. At that range they seemed to be perched almost on the end of the rifle. Mahomed Khan

HOPE AND DESPAIR

turned towards me and patted his heart. Let your buck fever run its course, he signified. Then he turned his eyes to Heaven as one beseeching divine succour. But these manifestations meant nothing to me. All that I knew was that down there below was the biggest oorial in the world, and that unless something was done soon it would be off, never to be seen again. I pushed my rifle forward over the ledge, drew a bead and pressed the trigger. I saw a spurt of dust over the big ram's back. There was a wild scramble, and then the whole herd halted and looked back. I fired again : the same spurt in the same place. And then the herd made off. There are some things about which one cannot write, even of oneself. It would not be decent. I will, therefore, draw the tail of Mahomed Khan's Puggaree over the scene.

Late that same evening, tired, dispirited and perfectly confident that I had lost the only oorial in the Salt Range, we came upon another herd of about ten oorial, two, if not three, of which were shootable heads. The light was beginning to fail, but the wind and the lie of the hill were with us, and Mahomed Khan put me within a hundred yards of the nearest beast. I honestly believe that at the moment he wanted success almost as much for me as for himself—for his own payment and his own *izzat*, for as the doyen of the Salt Hills shikaris that was the most important thing of all. This time there was no buck fever. I was determined not to let that sort of thing ruffle me again. I was as icy as a Duchess to a gate-crasher. But, once more, exactly the same

FIRST HEADS

thing happened. There was a neat little splash just over the back of my ram. I was making the same elementary mistake which everybody is inclined to make when firing downhill. I was going high.

I was sick with misery. Either I was bewitched, or the oorial, or perhaps we both were. But I managed to keep my head, and I still hold that fact to my credit. I took a sight somewhere about his forearm, and fired again. He plumped down dead in his tracks. It was the first animal that I had ever shot—and I remember still how amazed I was at the awful suddenness of it; not a kick, not a flicker. One moment he was nibbling at the grass, the next he was lying stone dead. And it was I who had brought this thing to pass.

But there was no time for philosophic questioning. Mahomed Khan was making down that hill as fast as his old legs would carry him to perform his *halal*. (No follower of the prophet can eat meat whose throat was not cut before death by a co-religionist.) As far as Mahomed Khan was concerned, I never killed a beast dead in all the many stalks I had with him, for he always managed to find enough life in the beast to do his throat-cutting, though I doubt not that his tongue was on many occasions in his wise old cheek.

But we were six miles or so from camp, and the darkness was falling with its usual staggering suddenness. There was no time to stand in triumph over the product of my bow and spear. Mahomed Khan, spurning the life-size skinning knife which I had brought out from England, had the head off and the

A FIRST STAG

gralloch done in no time, with the aid of an ancient knife of the type used by under-gardeners to grub weeds from between the stones of a flagged path. And laden with the horns and as much meat as we could manage, we made our way back to camp. As I have said before, I trod on air. And the oorial page in my new edition of Rowland Ward was well-thumbed for weeks after.

My first Scottish stag was a very different affair. It was killed on a forest where the shooting of stags is considered with some further object in view than that season's bag. Trash was shot in any quantity, but no promising head was ever shot till it was certain that it had reached its prime. My host had decreed, perhaps too kindly—that if possible a good head was to be found for me. ("Is Mr. — to kill a beast, or have a shot, or see some deer, or just be taken for a walk?" I blush to add the old chestnut, which all sporting publishers must surely keep permanently in type.) In this forest, too, every effort was made to keep a fair proportion of stags and hinds. Consequently, there seemed to my untutored eye all the red deer in the Highlands on our beat that day. Time and time again, Macrae would bring out the glass and look over a stag. But he would always be "no quite ready," or "a nice wee staggie next year," or "nobbut trash." And my impatience grew into a mighty and consuming fire—I who was longing to shoot my first red deer.

And all the delay was intolerable. Finally, about three o'clock in the afternoon, after a prolonged survey of the opposite side of the glen—which I

FIRST HEADS

had hardly bothered to turn my glass on to—after all, what was the good?—Macrae tersely signified that he had seen a worthy head. Again, with the resilience of youth I was transported from the depths of gloom to the heights of despair. Indeed, my only concern was that I should miss the beast! That the infallible Macrae should not fail to put me in reach of an easy shot seemed incredible. In fact, I never considered it. Down the hillside we went, across the burn at the bottom, waded down its course for a hundred yards, and, then, up behind a sheltering ridge. There then ensued an almost interminable crawl. Looking back I strongly suspect that it was a great deal longer than was strictly necessary, and that Macrae was determined to show me that a good stag's head is not easily come by as all that. I remember that our course took us through a small burn, and the water from a small burn is no less icy when you suddenly subside into it than that of the Spey at Gordon Castle!

However, we duly arrived behind a little peat bank, from which Macrae judged that we would get a fair view. He removed the cover from the rifle. I remember quite well thinking that he had left this vital preliminary far too late, and ever since this has seemed to me to be one of the strangest differences between stalking in Scotland and stalking elsewhere, small and unimportant though it is. I grabbed for the rifle, but Macrae politely withheld it from me after the pattern of the old family butler warned by his master not to let a boy of sixteen have more than one glass of port! “You'll no be shooting straight

A NICE TEN-POINTER

till you're getting your breath," he said, and there I had to lie till he thought I was fit to shoot. Unfortunately, those three minutes had helped to deteriorate my morale entirely. When I pushed my head up and my rifle forward there were two of the hinds looking fixedly in our direction, and the stag was getting suspicious. "There's plenty of time," hissed Macrae, but I was beyond counsel. It seemed to me that in another half second my first stag would be bounding away before I had pulled the trigger. I pulled the trigger, and, of course, missed. I often have wondered since whether my sights were ever aligned. Forty yards on he stopped and looked back. "Take him noo," said Macrae. This time I took some sort of aim, but it was a difficult shot, and though I dropped that stag I was conscious even then, as I am ten times the more conscious now, that it was a supreme fluke. It was a very nice ten-pointer, just going back, and I remember—how unreasonable is Youth—feeling fairly disappointed that it was not a royal !

However, when the gralloch was over, all disappointment soon melted as we came in off the hill with the congratulations of Macrae and the gillie. Later, when he had admired the head, my host said to Macrae, "Did Mr. —— shoot well?" And Macrae replied, "There'll not be a prettier shot than that fired in the forest this year." That is why I thought then, as I still think, that there is no greater gentleman in the world than the Highland stalker.

There is another first head that I remember well, my first tiger. Most of my friends in India who

FIRST HEADS

were keen on shooting had already shot tigers, but I had always stuck to the Himalayas, and so I felt that it was time that I, too, joined in the ball. I felt that not having shot a tiger was a slur on my reputation, and one which needed instant removal. My first introduction to *felis leo* I have mentioned in the chapter on "Lost Chances." It is a curious thing if one talks to any fellow Briton about shooting in India he says at once, and eagerly, "Did you shoot a tiger?" If the answer is "no," he takes no further interest, not though one had shot the biggest of bison, the mightiest of markhor. In Africa the first question is "Did you shoot a lion?" If you did not, you are dismissed from human thought with a gesture. Hence, though I had already some sporting experience, which always means that one thinks one knows everything there is to be known about the killing of wild animals, it was a matter of pressing urgency to me to kill that tiger.

I had the experience on the occasion in question which all poor men who have shot in India are used to, a great difficulty in obtaining baits. Who does not know those interminable and irritating delays waiting in stuffy P.W.D. bungalows before setting out to one's block? Baits yesterday, baits to-morrow, never, never baits to-day. There is always a drought (or a flood), or the market at the neighbouring town is postponed owing to an outbreak of plague (or small-pox). I know no remedy for these delays. Unless one is very rich, or an important official, they invariably occur, but probably the best thing to do is to write to the local game-ranger well in

RICH MEN AND RAJAHS

advance enclosing, say, thirty rupees for the purchase of baits. The arrival of money before the Sahib, presaging untold possibilities after his arriving, has the most steadyng effect.

On this occasion I was shooting in Orissa. All my friends had killed their tigers, after the manner of rich men and rajahs only, in the Central Provinces. I felt that Orissa, too, was a slur on the tigerless. I had sent on my money for the baits, but only one peculiarly mouldy and decrepit little buffalo was forthcoming. Rage, entreaty, sinister threat, alike, were of no avail. But no more buffaloes were forthcoming, and so I made off to my block by no means certain that my ewe lamb would not die a natural death before even the tiger could make a meal off it. However, it was duly tethered out in a likely glade not very far from water, and we hoped for the best. Nothing more happened for three days.

The place I was shooting in was in the hills up above the Chilka Lake, which is only a night in the train distant from Calcutta, and which, incidentally, affords a capital duck shoot. It was called Rajin, and it stands some 3,000 feet above the sea, so at any period of the year the temperature is equitable. I had been out very early in the morning tracking bison, and was having breakfast at about half-past nine o'clock, when an excited native rushed in to report that a tiger was eating the buffalo. I didn't take much notice as I took him to mean that the tiger *had* eaten the buffalo during the night. Still, as it was our only buffalo, as it were our last worm, it behoved me to do something about it, or go home

FIRST HEADS

tigerless. So off I went. I remember that I picked up my rifle quite as a last-minute idea, for the buffalo was only five minutes away from the bungalow. I was wearing tennis shoes, and we moved quite silently down the path to the place where our kill was. I did not speak to my guide, I recall, which proved to be a very good thing. There is nothing more likely to frighten away an animal than the sound of the human voice. The path had a sharp bend in it just ten yards from where we had tethered our bait, and as I strode up to it in haughty self-confidence I noticed my guide eyeing me with furtive admiration. He evidently thought that I must indeed be a Burra Sahib Bahadur, if this was my method of disposing of *felis leo*. As we reached the corner he fell back respectfully, which I attributed to the submissive desire of a member of a subject race to let me have my proper place.

As I rounded the corner I suddenly found that my guide had for once spoken the absolute and literal truth. There was the tiger with his head right down in the kill. I had never seen a tiger before outside the Zoo, save for the glimpse in the Belgaum jungles already mentioned. I well remember that my impression was how like a tiger he was—how like a tiger of the picture books, all stripes and waving tail. And in the dead silence I remember the fearful loudness of the crunch, crunch, crunching of my poor emaciated buffalo. And then I came to the conclusion that this was the moment when one withdrew backwards, as in the presence of Royalty, for, after all, the tiger is a royal beast. Thus I got back round



A DINNER DISTURBED

[Marquis de la Falaise]

A CARELESS TIGER

the corner (where, doubtless, my retainer removed me from the class of Burra Sahib Bahadur for ever) and crept off down a little nallah bed, from which I could get a sure shot at less intimate range. The tiger throughout had been completely oblivious of our presence.

I put my head up, took careful aim—I wasn't going to muff my first tiger!—and fired. The tiger gave one colossal jump into the air with its tail stretched up to Heaven like a Louis Wain cat, and disappeared. When I rose from my nallah he was no more to be seen. Could I have missed him? Surely not—and, yet, I had missed things before, more than once. With my heart hammering out a mixture of fear, chagrin, amazement and hope, I approached the kill. Poor beast—half his buttocks had been torn away, but he had not, I think, suffered, for his neck had been broken at the first spring of his enemy.

I looked all round. There was a distinct patch of blood. I followed it, and it developed into the drop, drop, drop of an unmistakable blood track. Well, I hadn't missed anyhow. I now had to follow him up, and that wasn't a thing I felt particularly pleased about. Had pens and ink and paper been about I could have written touching farewells to England, home and beauty. However, I twiddled my thumbs with as much nonchalance as I could manage. I wanted to get back into the Burra Sahib Bahadur class. I waited out the statutory half hour and it was not a pleasant wait, I recall. We then proceeded very gingerly down the trail. We had gone three

FIRST HEADS

hundred yards when suddenly my tracker stiffened and pointed. There, about a hundred yards away, was the tiger lying under a tree. A weight lifted from my shoulders like a cork rising from the bottom of the bath, not so much relief at not having to face a wounded tiger, as relief at being spared an even less enviable alternative, having to face the ridicule of my acquaintance. However, I knew the rules. I raised my rifle and gave him a shot. Too many aspirants had walked up to supposedly dead tigers. I approached to within twenty yards and hurled a stone at his flank. He did not stir. He was mine.

Well, that was a moment of sober triumph, I recall. Not the same overwhelming sense of delight as my first oorial, but a very pleasurable moment, nevertheless. Let 'em all come. Nobody again could ever dub me tigerless. He was a nearly full-grown male tiger cub, with a splendid thick winter coat, a big white rough, that would have done credit to his Manchurian cousins. His pelt still adorns my dining-room floor. I would less soon tread the finest Bokhara than that skin.

On my first head wall I have mentioned my first ibex. That was a typical product of a first shoot which lacked every essential of the chase save keenness. It was a bad head, badly shot, and the whole of the work was done by my shikaris. This particular ibex came from Baltistan, like most other first ibex. I was up the Indus Valley beyond Rhondu, not particularly good country to shoot in, and extremely inaccessible. It was my first trip with Ahad

A H A D M A L I K

Malik—peace to his old ashes—and though he afterwards proved to be a good and loyal servant to me and proved friend—naturally on my first trip, uncertain if he was ever to see me again, he ran the shoot more or less as he wished and as my inexperience permitted him to do.

On the fourth or fifth day after we had arrived in our nallah, while I was stretched on my back after lunch surveying the Empyrean and mentally pursuing bigger and bigger ibex, Ahad Malik suddenly announced that he had spotted a head on the other side of the valley. In a very few seconds I was at his side, but it took me a very long time before I could make the quarry out, apparently asleep in a clump of rocks. We descended gingerly to the bottom of the slope and ascended equally gingerly up the other side. There I could see his horns quite easily now. They seemed enormous. "Is he big?" I hissed. "Quite big," hissed back Ahad Malik with anything but truth. Though for the matter of that my itching finger would have drawn the trigger on anything with horns. (I think as we mature we are all apt to run down inexperienced young sportsmen who make these mistakes, forgetting that we did exactly the same things ourselves. After a certain period our own little errors become good stories; those of our juniors are the abomination of desolations. One or two dud first heads do very little harm, provided the first offenders' act is not pleaded indefinitely.)

We made some sort of approach to within more or less effective range and I fired. The ibex made

FIRST HEADS

off through the rocks. Well, there was a reasonably copious blood-track, and after a short pursuit Ahad Malik called it off. To-morrow, he assured me, Habiba (the chota shikari, and, need I say it?—his son) would follow the flight of the devouring eagles, and I should have my head. I was by no means convinced, however. It seemed to me to be leaving a very important matter far too much to chance. However, I accepted expert advice and returned to camp. Next evening the head duly arrived with some sort of head-skin on it, and I accepted it without demur.

I have often wondered since whether that was my head or not. It is a common trick among even the best Cashmere shikaris to palm off old heads, picked up off the graves, or even, occasionally, kept “on ice,” by the villagers who have shot them when the snow has kept them low in the winter, and shooting is easy, and then stored them in snow till the summer brings a Sahib. The Sahib wounds, or thinks he wounds a beast, and in due course the shikaris bring back a head found, of course, after incredible exertion in a place to which the Sahib could not penetrate owing to its extreme inaccessibility.

The tale has a number of variations, the most common of which is the blanket trick. The Sahib is led through the gloaming to a mulberry tree, in which a black form is just discernible. He fires and the black form drops from the tree and disappears. Below the tree blood is found, and a bearskin is duly produced. I always think it must be tricky work for the man who manipulates the blanket and

A FIRST ROE

runs to take it away. He might so easily get the second barrel ! Looking back in the light of mature knowledge I am of the opinion, on balance, that the ibex *was* mine, otherwise it would not be among the first heads. At the time, of course, it never occurred to me for a moment that it could be anything else. I have described so many blissful moments already that I am not going to enlarge on the relief I felt when I found that Habiba had the horns over his shoulder as he came within the arc of the camp-fire's light.

My first roe was another pleasurable moment, though, I think, chiefly a moment of anxiety. I was shooting with a friend, for whose sporting capacities I have the greatest respect. I did not, therefore, want to shoot badly when I was with him. Since then, as I have described in the chapter on "Still-Hunting," we have had many stalks together after roe, and the novelty of letting him watch me miss has somewhat worn off ! Nevertheless, I shall never learn to shoot when I am watched. I remain essentially a lone hunter. We quartered the whole of the woods the first day without getting a shot. We had a fleeting glimpse of one good head and looked over several more. But on the second morning, soon after dawn, we got a glimpse of brown in the clearing : and out came our glasses. There was a whispered colloquy, and, finally, it was decided the head was good enough. Step by step from tree to tree we approached, till, I suppose, we were about seventy yards away. Suddenly the roe stopped feeding. "Take him," hissed my friend. I stood stock-

FIRST HEADS

still: and it was not an easy place for a shot, and I was determined to make a bull or nothing.

The next two minutes are memorable to me, not for anything I did, or for the fact that I did or did not kill my first roe, but because during that period I lived through no agonies of anticipation myself, but through the far more agonizing moments that my friend endured. I knew I was being deliberately maddeningly slow. I could *feel* the atmosphere behind. I could *hear* the thoughts ticking in my friend's brain. I *knew*, how well I knew, that he must be longing for me to shoot, feeling certain that the roe would make off, wondering what ailed me.

I, for my part, was determined not to fire without certainty. There was a tree some twenty yards on, against which I proposed to take a rested shot. The roe was still perfectly unsuspecting, and I felt that if necessary I could snap in a shot as his head came up. Yet with every cautious step that I took forward I continued to sense the tumult surging through the stationary figure behind. I could feel him checking the impulse to hiss out, "Shoot, you damn fool, shoot." I reached my tree, took aim, and brought the buck down dead: it would have been disgraceful if I had done otherwise. "Well done," said my friend. "I thought you were never going to shoot." I laughed. "I was much more worried over you," I told him, "than I was over my first roe." As I have said I am never able to hit anything when I am being watched, and on the few occasions when I have had to act as cicerone to others, I have sensed their anguished glances in my direction, and hung

UNENDING RAPTURES

back. After all, if they can't do the last hundred yards of a stalk themselves, nothing I am able to whisper to them is likely to be of much avail.

So much then for the first fine careless raptures. They never really end. Something of their terrific savour is lost with repetition, but with so little done in the world of shooting, so much to do, I feel I will be able to extract some careless abandon out of an increasing succession of first heads as long as I can hold my rifle straight.

CHAPTER VIII

LOST CHANCES

SO much for the luck that was good—now for some that was indifferent, and much that was vile. The ordinary big-game chapter begins and ends on an accepted note. This is quite a Good Thing, as they say in “1066 and All That.” One knows where one is, and that is almost as dear to the Anglo-Saxon heart as avoidance of the thin end of the wedge, a horrible danger compared to which the thick end is a mere nothing. So our story begins more or less thus. “It was sundowner time in N’Impo N’Pimpo (or Sweatipur), when my faithful old gun-bearer, Simba (or my loyal old shikari, Bagh Mahomed), arrived with news of Bongo (or bison).” After that the story follows trodden ways, with a few dissertations on the value of large- (or small-) bore rifles for Bongo (or bison), on a suitable medicine-chest for the expedition in seven pages of close print, and an account of some very interesting polyandrist (or polygamist) customs among the locals (whom, of course, Simba or Bagh Mahomed thoroughly despised). And thus through various misfortunes gallantly overcome to the inevitable conclusion. “Then as I stood upon the body of this gallant beast and looked at those beautiful lyre-shaped (or massive sweeping) horns I realized that all the toil and anxiety had been worth while.”

PERSEVERANCE AND LUCK

But, somehow, we get a good deal less of the unsuccessful stalks, of the last chances which after all come in at least as great numbers. This is not altogether the fault of the big-game hunters, but to some extent of their public, who, not unnaturally, like a happy ending, as in most other forms of literature. If one was to write a book where every shot was a miss nobody would ever want to read it: Still, it would give a most unfair impression of one's big-game experiences if one allowed a book to go through the press without some references to one's own calamities and inefficiencies. I, personally, am a persevering hunter, but I still am very far short of perfection, while I never have been and never will be a really good shot. My chief asset as a big-game shot is luck. The beast that I fail to gather is almost always a poor head, or one that I did not terribly want. With the rare beast, or the big head, I have been very lucky. In this chapter I am going to try and show the reverse side of the medal.

To this day there still haunts me the vision of a certain ibex. It was the biggest ibex I had ever seen, and probably will ever see outside Central Asia. It was not less than forty-seven inches in length of horn, and I think it was nearer fifty. It was one of the biggest ibex in the Himalayas at that time, and I had set my heart on getting a big ibex. Now, any ibex of forty inches is well enough for a first trip, for an ibex is always an ibex: though I, personally, have never thought him a peculiarly difficult animal to stalk. The majority of ibex in my opinion being less difficult to get up to than the *ovis ammon* and the

LOST CHANCES

markhor. The great fun in shooting an ibex—after one's first—should be in finding a big one. If one wanders up either the Shigar or the Shyok valleys (preferably the latter, as it is far the less frequented) one is certain of seeing a number of herds unless the season is very far advanced. And one must then look them over one after the other till one has found a head of forty-four or forty-five inches.

I had gone up with Ahad Malik to the head of the Shigar valley and had already shot a good head of about forty-five inches. I was the first sportsman to cross the Zogi-La in, I think, early March, and we had the great valley to ourselves ; it was quite undisturbed, and the snow kept the ibex low. I am quite sure that the secret of success in Himalayan shooting is to go *early* if after the capridæ (markhor and ibex), and *late* if in pursuit of the ovidæ (bharral, ammon, etc.). The former are easy to get at when there is still fairly heavy snow on the mountains : the latter who live in more open country are pursued most easily in the autumnal rutting season. So, in this particular case, my stage was set fair. Everything was in my favour.

I recall that I felt in particularly good form on the fatal day, because on the previous evening we had stopped at a village where there was a natural hot spring—a not uncommon experience in Baltistan. I had had about two hours of Turkish bath and had emerged with an enhanced self-respect. Thus purged, I felt no ibex could escape me. The news continued to be good on arrival. Up on the hillside above the grove in which we made our camp we could make

A FINE IBEX

out a herd of ibex through my telescope, and, at least, three of them were clearly very big. The next day at dawn we set off, and we soon had the herd located. There was, undoubtedly, one old fellow in the herd who carried a head of—no, I couldn't believe it!—nearly fifty inches. Now, so far, everything had gone exceedingly well for me on that shoot. I had got two very good markhor and a very nice ibex. I only wanted that one big ibex, and I would die happy. And it seemed a very easy sort of business. There is nothing in my opinion that succeeds so ill in big-game shooting as success. Careless shots be-gotten of a number of bull's-eyes are never sped to the target by some kind-hearted Mercury. I have practically never brought off a real fluke in my life.

I could not tear myself away from the telescope. He had a wide spread, and his horns came right out from his body, and turned up again with a twist almost like an ammon's. This was not the scimitar curve of the ordinary ibex, it was the full bend of the sickle! The owner of the horns, too, was in fine form that morning. The sun had risen to warm him, and he was making a good breakfast. I could distinctly descry his little goatee beard, and once I saw him scratch at his flanks with the end of his horns. And those horns would make my reputation as a shikari for ever and ever. After all, I had scorned lesser fry for a week, so here was my reward! Ahad Malik was very silent, too. No doubt, he, too, was thinking of the effect of those horns on his *izzat*. East and West seemed to be meeting for once! A

LOST CHANCES

young buck of forty inches came and stood beside him: it was Brompton Oratory to St. Paul's!

We started off. But when we had gone a little way we found that it wasn't quite as easy as we thought, because it was one of those stalks where the quarry was above us, and there was no way round. On the left was a great precipice, above them the thick snow, and, on their right, the open hillside, almost unbroken. It was perfectly possible to approach them from below, but that offers a type of shot I never take for choice, quite apart from the fact that a stalk from below is far more likely to be seen than any other.

We got about 300 yards below the ibex without much difficulty, though it was a pretty stiff climb, and from there we had just a peep. They seemed more restive, but they didn't seem to know we were there. There was a long side-nallah here, and we made up it to a group of rocks, quite under cover. When next we ventured a peep the herd had definitely got our wind, or had heard us. Two small ibex were making off round a ledge, the rest, including our giant, were gazing pointedly in our direction. I felt it to be now or never, aimed at the big fellow, and fired. The bullet passed just over the top of his back. I saw it strike. A bound, and he was out of sight beyond the rock, and then he appeared again and began to negotiate a ledge at a quick walk, with six or seven others. I was a little rattled, and my next shot was also a palpable miss: there was just time for a third, and that was a miss, too. All three went into exactly the same spot, I believe. A

DOWN IN THE FOREST

small square just over his withers. The monster disappeared from view with a contemptuous kick of his heels, while the rest of his brethren, now thoroughly alarmed, scattered up the hillside which, in five minutes, was void as the polar regions. It was then that I realized the full import of silence upon some peak in Darien. I should, perhaps, add that I have never got my big ibex.

A second occasion which is almost equally poignant occurred in the expedition, which I have described in other chapters, in British Columbia. Frank Philipps and I had climbed up to the top of the forest to look for sheep tracks. We had camped in a wooded basin of the hills, and in the evening went out to have a spy round. The rut proper for wapiti had not yet begun, but some of them had begun to bugle. We were sitting in a clearing in the forest, and down below was a little stream surrounded by willows. We were, perhaps, 400 yards from the stream. On the near bank to us there was a strip of open pasture, running to the edge of the forest in which we were. There was a good view from our little clearing and we could see all round the basin, so we settled ourselves down and made ourselves comfortable. I leant my rifle up against a tree, and then we both moved forward about ten yards to a point of greater vantage.

After we had been there for about half an hour there was a movement in the trees immediately below us, and a thin piping sort of call. It was a wapiti hind. Almost immediately from down by the stream —“creek,” of course, to a Canadian!—there came a

LOST CHANCES

full-throated answer, not the three- or four-noted bugle of the high rut but, nevertheless, a definite prelude to it. We hastily scanned the willows with our glasses. After a minute he called again, and then we saw the bushes shaking. A minute later he emerged. It needed no more than a glance to realize that here was a very big stag. "Half a second," hissed Frank; "let's look him over. Six on that side," he said, "but I want to be sure he's even. He's sure a big stag," he added. "There's not a better that will go back to Banff this year; he's nigh sixty inches if he's a foot."

I, a poor Britisher, used to red deer, had never seen the like of it. The top points alone seemed about eighteen inches long, stretching back, not like a stag at all, but like something primeval from an Irish bog. And the beam of his horns was as thick as my arm. He was still tugging at the willows, when the hind called again. Then he swung round and walked slowly into the open pasture. It was like the vision of St. Hubert. His head was up and he carried it with the easy pride that is the stag's alone, and never have I seen one of such perfect symmetry, or span. He was only 200 yards off, and walking slowly forward. It was a perfect shot. And then, as he moved, the hind called again, but this time it was quite a different note: not one of love but of alarm. "Quick," hissed Frank. I whipped round for my rifle. It was ten yards behind. By the time I had seized it and pushed forward the safety-catch the stag was already moving towards the belt of trees below. I dropped on one knee, shaking

TRIBAL HUNTING

rather, and began to draw a bead. But before I was anything like steady he had disappeared into the forest. The needle was back in the haystack. We quartered that glade for the next three days, but we never saw him again, and though I was afterwards to shoot a very fine wapiti indeed, it had not the same perfect symmetry and beauty as he. Moral : Stick on to your rifle.

Another lost chance that I can still hardly bear to think of with equanimity was when I was shooting last year with Samaki Salmon. Our first camp was at Ukuti upon the border of Karamoja, and here Samaki fell sick with a poisoned finger. I, in the meantime, had shot a couple of buffalo and had also bagged my licensed bull elephant in company with Mrs. Samaki, who is an accomplished Diana. We then proceeded to concentrate on roan, the other local species that I was most anxious to get.

Now, in that part of the Northern Province of Uganda, tribal hunting of game is permitted. Uganda is a native Protectorate and we are under certain obligations not to interfere with their tribal customs. Large-scale hunts have long been practised there, and it is said that these help to preserve the manliness of the native. Now I will admit that these arguments are not without force, but I think that tribal hunting should be abolished, nevertheless. Cannibalism and suttee each in their own sphere are old established native customs, but that reason was not considered sufficient to preserve them. And I see nothing particularly manly in driving an unfortunate kongoni into a pit or pelting an eland with spears as he gallops

LOST CHANCES

past. However, whether it is justified or whether it is not, it has, I should say, definitely diminished the amount of game in those neighbourhoods where it continues, though there are people who deny this. What it has done to my certain knowledge is to make the animals in that neighbourhood exceedingly difficult to approach. Even stupid animals like the kongoni were much on the alert, while the roan—they drove us nearly insane.

There were any amount of droppings ; there were any amount of tracks ; occasionally, even, a view through glasses, a glimpse in the bush of a waving tail. But there this ended. Never did we get anything like into a position for a shot. They were too wary by half, those hippotragi. Musia became convinced that they were bewitched, and that no efforts would be sufficient to outwit them. And we had been working *really* hard. At the end of a week of unsuccessful endeavours Samaki was sufficiently recovered for him to take a turn round. So off we went at dawn to what he thought was a likely spot. It was not uninstructive to see how hope returned to his entourage. Every bush was supposed a "bouriya," so great was their faith in his powers as a worker of miracles. We had been casting round for about two hours when everything suddenly began to happen with a devastating suddenness. "There he is," hissed Samaki. I swung round and found myself gazing at a herd of kongoni. At the same moment Musia frantically pushed a round into the breech and handed me my gun. As he did so I suddenly picked up the roan against a dark bush—

MISSING A SITTER

he seemed perfectly colossal among the kongoni. "He's a good buck," said Samaki, and I seized the rifle from Musia. (All this, of course, had happened in about three seconds.)

Then the kongoni sped off like a bursting cloud of rain, great lolloping stupid beasts that they are, and paused again among the bushes, thirty yards on. The roan, made bolder perhaps by his companions, paused, too, broadside on, perhaps eighty yards away. It was the greatest sitter I have ever had. I upped with my rifle and missed him clean.

"You and Musia follow him up," said Samaki. I rushed off into the bush. Neither of us had the faintest hope that that roan would stop within the next five miles. However, I was glad of the opportunity to hide my diminished head, and it was three hours before I could pluck up courage to show my face to the mighty hunter. Samaki, however, has the most superb sense of humour, and he has seen quite a number of beasts hit or missed in his time. His major preoccupation at the moment of my arrival was the shortage of butter in the lunch-basket. Of such are the Kingdom of Heaven.

There are two other lost chances that I recall, and they are, perhaps, as bitter as any of them, for they involve wounded beasts. It is a very difficult thing to write of a wounded beast. There is much to be said for the point of view that one should never do so. On the other hand, there is the standpoint that if one does not admit to one's failures in all humility, one may look as if one was trying to proclaim oneself a super-man. May I say here in self-defence that I

LOST CHANCES

simply loathe the idea of a wounded animal, and quite honestly I think I really do gather a great deal of what I shoot at.

The first of these occasions was in the Chakrata hills between Dehra Dun and Simla. I think the wooded slopes behind Deoban are almost the loveliest spot in the Himalayas, and from Cashmere to Darjeeling I know very many of its beauty spots. They are comparatively seldom visited. Forest officers and P.W.D. officials, occasionally also an enterprising Viceroy on his way to Simla with the usual draggle of aides-de-camp before and behind, and the inevitable magnificences. But, in general, one has the simple paths and the wild flowers and the great pinewoods to oneself. This is not a first-class shooting-ground, but there are gooral and serow, and an occasional black bear and hill sambhur, while farther afield there are tahr to be had, and, I believe, red bear. I had been there on several occasions and was anxious in particular to shoot a serow, that strangest of all the Himalayan animals, and the only one, save the Musk deer and the red bear, that I had never shot. The serow is essentially a forest beast. There is no set way of shooting him. One must go to country where serow are known to be, and still-hunt for them. Up in the Chakrata hills one's still-hunting was more or less confined to the paths. Plunging about on the hillside would only frighten off one's quarry before ever one had seen him. We had been stopping in the dak bungalow at Mandali (the scene of the death of one of the most famous man-eating hill tigers of all time) and had gone out for the evening

hunt. As we were turning for home the path curved round a little re-entrant, and suddenly I saw a full-grown male serow cropping at the grass just below the path on the opposite side of the ravine. I froze in my path and then sank slowly into the hillside like a descending lift. My shikari (a splendid little Garwhali, whose name I have forgotten) sank like a secondary lift behind. The light was failing and things were not too easy, for the serow was a good 150 yards off. Still I had plenty of time and a rested rifle. Under such circumstances I am supremely confident. I waited till he moved broadside on into the best possible light. Then I fired. He went flat over and rolled kicking into the bushes. I jumped up, reloaded and ran forward. At last I had got my serow. By the time we had got there it already seemed to have grown darker. I ran down the hill—it was an exceedingly steep place—into the bushes, mentally pulling out the measuring-tape. There was nothing there. Still I was sure it was dead, and we went on a little farther. Nothing. And farther still. But still nothing. Then we came to a patch of blood. He had lain down. So we pressed on. There was no time for more that night because it was now quite dark. But next morning we were confident that we would find our beast. We were back at dawn, and we spent the whole of the day on that incredibly steep hillside searching about among the rocks and bushes. We found one more patch of blood where he had evidently lain that night, but nothing more. The next day we had to go home; but I am convinced that somewhere within a mile of

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us that he was lying dead. I do not think I have ever felt quite so chagrined about anything. I have never shot a serow.

The other occasion was in Scotland. I had arrived by the early morning train and had gone straight out to the hill with a borrowed rifle and a reputation of some sort as a big-game shot. They are about the two worst things, in my opinion, that one can take to a Scottish Forest. I was in particularly good spirits because the wonder of being in London for dinner and waking up in the Highlands after a comfortable night's sleep is one that has an unfailing fascination for me. I know this remark is not exactly original, but I will let it go. I fired two shots at a full-sized stone just before we moved off. The first went wide to the left. The second hit the left edge. In my foolish pride I said it was enough.

Three hours later we were crawling up a burn after a "nice wee staggie" as Dougal termed it. The nice wee staggie, however, was exceptionally wary. He liked us not at all. Finally, one of his attendant hinds—anybody with any knowledge of the technique of sporting journalism will know that hinds are invariably "attendant"—made off and they all came across our bows at a steady trot. But then just at the critical juncture they turned round to have a look at us in a way that everybody knows. My first shot—taken with that first free careless rapture—was a clean miss; my second taken a second or two later hit him in the foreleg. I do not think a bone was broken, for he went away at a good pace, slightly lame. Dougal was up in a moment and in

EXPLAINING THE CALAMITY

pursuit, but the stag was down over the brow, and into the burn beyond and far up the side of the corrie beyond before we could get another shot. And that was that. You must remember that I had not yet seen my host, and it is a poor sort of way to arrive at the lodge to say that one has wounded a beast, and has failed to finish him off. To make matters worse, I hardly knew him. All I had to commend myself to him was this rather spurious reputation for having shot big game already mentioned. I felt that elephants, lions, tigers and buffalo had gone out to a hundred to one, no takers.

What attitude does one adopt under these circumstances ? The humble, the jocular, the pass-it-off-lightly, the best-form-of-defence-is-the-offensive ? There are many books on Highland stalking : they tell one of the measure of one's tip to the stalker, and of the bore of one's rifle : of the shape of one's hat, of the problems of wind, of horn growth, of the glories of the sunset, and the splendours of red deer and golden eagle. But a man in the position that I then found myself in would have given the whole of Highland lore for a formula to resolve his present difficulty. Had a motor-car appeared on the road leading to the lodge with a friend at the wheel offering me a speedy removal back to the metropolis I would willingly have accepted. I know of no greater chagrin than was mine. And, in inverse ratio to the usual procedure, the nearer the lodge got the less comforting did it seem.

Well, my chosen attitude was a humility that would have done credit to St. Francis. My host did not

LOST CHANCES

pretend he enjoyed such news, which one would realize was false politeness, but asserted with pungency that these things can and do happen. But the memory of that afternoon lingers with me still.

There is one last occasion, and it happened only three days before I began to write this chapter, and, therefore, the feel of the knife is still keen in the green wound. It happened in Dorset, at a spot where I have had a number of happy days in the open stalking Japanese deer. These escaped park deer have quite an interesting history, and they afford far better sport than many people would believe, and, therefore, I will digress a little here on the subject of park deer and their destruction.

There are deer all over England, fallow and Japanese deer and roe, and here and there a red deer, not park deer, but real wild deer that have escaped from parks, and are all the wilder in that they once had sanctuary. They are far more widely distributed than many people think. But it is in particular of the deer in Dorset that I am writing, whose introduction goes back almost to the Conquest. In 1280, there were 2,000 fallow deer in Cranbourne Chase, and it seems that the right of killing them passed exclusively to the Pitt Rivers family. In 1830, the then Lord Rivers was bought out, and the deer were gradually destroyed, but their descendants are found in parks and in the wild state all over Dorset to-day.

In 1800, the then Earl of Dorchester introduced the roe deer to Milton, and in the 'eighties Lord Ilchester put them down at Melbury. The then Radclyffe of Hyde hunted roe in the 'thirties, and in

JAPANESE DEER

comparatively recent times these roe were hunted from Melbury. Two couple of Dorset roe were sent to the Royal Park at Windsor by Mr. Pleydell, and their descendants are still to be found there. Japanese deer have escaped from the Major Radclyffe's park at Hyde, and from Brownsea Island (where they were introduced in 1896). The same deer were introduced from Japan by Mr. Austin Mackenzie of Carradale into Kintyre in, I believe, 1893, nine hinds and two stags surviving to be turned down. These deer have spread since, and are interbreeding with other deer in Argyllshire. They are also reported in Peeblesshire.

Japanese deer were introduced into a particular park in Dorset many years ago, and some of them escaped, and now they have increased and multiplied till they are an unmitigated nuisance. They are also exceedingly wary. If one is motoring along the road over what we will call Egdon Heath, one can see them feeding placidly away in the middle distance. Poor park-fed brutes, one says, as one treads lightly on the gas. But if one sets out to stalk them, they are by no means easy money; and as there are quite a number of similar places throughout the country where the problem of these escaped park deer exists, I will give my views on the subjects. I do so in all humility, and with the rider that the paramount question in dealing with them must be local conditions.

Usually, I think, they dwell in woods or clumps of undergrowth, coming out to feed at dawn and dusk, or in the warmth of the morning and evening sun. If one is on the open ground or is very lucky,

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one may get an ordinary straightforward spy-and-crawl stalk, taking advantage of wind and ground. Such a stalk will not usually be easy, as there is so little covert from view. There is a third and very definite danger, and that is that one is often not able to shoot with safety.

These considerations weigh heavily when one surveys one's beast against the background of a south-country landscape, though on Egdon Heath one is on a miniature deer forest.

Supposing the deer lie up for the greater part of the day in or near these clumps of bushes, or sheltering woods, I think the ideal method is to hunt them in couples, each hunter carrying a small-bore rifle. Personally, I used a .250 Savage, but, of course, there are many others equally suitable. One rifle advances very slowly towards the area where the deer are known to be with the wind behind him. The other makes a long detour to the point where the deer will make for (almost certainly the nearest big wood) when "moved" by his companion. He will be rightly placed for the wind, of course.

One of two things will then probably happen. Either the deer will sit tight, and let the "mover" up so close that he may get a shot when they break cover—for I have found that like most other deer the Jappy will usually pause for a look after their first burst, though this is by no means invariably the case—or they will make off slowly and give a shot, if all goes well, to the waiting rifle beyond. One thing is quite certain with these deer that have become wild: they are fully acquainted with the meaning of

FINE FEELINGS

the nasty smell that is man, and once they have seen him in a place to which he does not usually come, they will make off, and probably without more delay. They usually live in country where they can see and hear the hunter before he sees them. So a cautious approach, making every use of glasses, is necessary. The slung binoculars of the roe-stalker are almost essential.

If the deer never leave their woods, there are three alternatives. One is driving ; I hate this method, and apart from that, I think it is inefficacious. One is shooting them with shot-guns at covert shoots ; I hate this method, too. I have always noted that if the host at a covert shoot says, "Look here, you fellows, there's a fallow deer out of the park in this plantation and it's doing a devil of a lot of damage ; shoot it if it comes out," then everybody assumes the expression of a Madonna in an Italian Primitive and says, "Oh ! I *couldn't*." But when the poor beast appears it has the same effect as that fatal word "woodcock," and everybody in and out of shot salutes its passage with a salvo. Now the truth is that if three or four persons, who can be trusted not to shoot save in the neck at a range of not more than ten yards, are instructed to shoot deer, then a few can be destroyed at a covert shoot humanely and expeditiously. But general shooting should not be allowed. The third and best method is to stalk them like roe, preferably at dawn and dusk in the more open glades that they are known to frequent.

The whole secret of success in killing these beasts, as in all the hunting of deer, is a knowledge of their

LOST CHANCES

habits. One must know the ground they work, and when they work it. Deer will move back to the same spot time and time again after being disturbed. And it must be remembered that these south-country deer think very little of a shot, for they hear them almost daily, and are not likely to differentiate between a rifle and a shot-gun. I do affirm that hunting them is not dead easy, and that it needs work and wood-craft, and a pit-your-wits-against-the-animal cunning.

But to return to Egdon Heath. There is a big open stretch of country there which runs down to some big woods. And on this stretch there are many clumps of trees and undergrowth which always hold deer. In early spring the bucks are beginning to herd together, and sometimes one will put as many as six or seven out of one clump, and then off they go, hop-hop-hop and away, without a pause, up to the brow of the heath and over into the smiling valley beyond. They always seem to let one get either so close that when they break covert they are off like a flash, or they appear when one is not yet in shot and move always 300 yards ahead of one into the shelter of the big wood.

There is one old buck in particular. I think he is the patriarch of all Egdon Heath; he has had a good innings, and I think it should be called off. He is mine own familiar friend. He always works one little corner of the heath, he always seems to return to it, and so far, though I have scored off his brethren, have been quite unable to best him. Last week I saw him from afar disappearing into his favourite thicket. For once the wind was blowing

ON EGDON HEATH

out of the big wood and not into it, and I felt like Cromwell at Dunbar. For his main retreat was cut off, and he must now face me in the open. "The Lord has delivered them into my hand," I said. And "Trust in God and keep your powder dry," I added in historical parenthesis, for the weather was inclement. On all fours—and Egdon Heath is full of unchartered swamps—I reached his lair. He did not move; I knew I must be within thirty yards of him. Suddenly there was a rending of the bushes, and he crashed out on the opposite side to me. I pulled myself from the swamp and ran after him. He was fifteen yards off on the other side of the clump. I was round after him in a circle left-handed. And he, whether by accident or design, ran round the clump to where I had lain in the swamp! I gave him full marks. He could not have made me look a bigger fool. And so, blown and winded, I finally caught sight of him on the skyline, a grand silhouette of noble horns (the classic Jap has eight points, as the roe has six and the red deer twelve) and black flanks and white rump, whence he passed with, I doubt not, a cynical leer over the ridge into the smiling countryside beyond.

Well, three days ago, together with two friends who were anxious to see the deer and something of their stalking, I went back to Egdon Heath. In the morning I had placed them in a likely spot, and had then made a detour to try and move the deer on to them. "Sit here," I had said, "and do not move. I may get one moving right past you." I went slowly through a big plantation, where I knew the

LOST CHANCES

deer lay, hoping possibly to get a shot, and, anyhow, to show the deer to my friends. I found tracks and droppings, but never saw a vestige of the real live buck. When I rejoined the rest of the party they were ecstatic. A large buck had walked out within twenty yards of them and moved slowly away into the big wood. Certainly they were in the stalls. I had never elbowed my way out of the cloak-room.

In the afternoon we went on to that very piece of ground where mine old familiar friend dwelt—he whom I have described already. I left the onlookers seated on a little bump whence a good view of the subsequent proceedings might be obtained, and started to explore various favourite spots which often held a buck. One after the other they proved blank. This, I felt, was a bore. I had shown them the buck, and I was determined to show them how to despatch him. I came to the last patch but one. When I was twenty yards from it a fine buck crashed out, *ventre à terre*, and made off. He stopped, however, quite according to plan, when he had gone about seventy yards, and offered me a fine broadside shot. Now, I thought, in my naughty pride, I'll show 'em how it's done. This is money for jam. I missed him clean. The stalls said they had a most uninterrupted view of a superb performance. And Augustus's heart, as the old tale runs, was too full to speak.

CHAPTER IX

STILL-HUNTING

THE reader has followed my faltering footsteps into the high hills and into the plains of Africa, and now I will ask him to bear with me while I consider some of the pros and cons of still-hunting, a form of big-game shooting already discussed, which is rather like deep-sea fishing. It is chuck and chance it. And yet the results obtained by the expert will always be twenty, thirty, a hundred times greater than those of even the luckiest novice. It requires, at best, a knowledge of woodcraft, of the habits of the quarry, and that element of cunning which one finds in a first-class poacher, such as no other form of hunting demands. I have a little of all these qualities, but only a little, and so still-hunting has never appealed to me as the other forms of big-game shooting.

In our own country it is to be found at its best in the pursuit of the roe deer. Indeed, roe-stalking, that most under-valued sport, is, perhaps, the highest manifestation of the art. The roe is, in my opinion, the most beautiful little animal to be found in Europe to-day. It has the slender beauty of the gazelle and the proud carriage of the hart. It makes its home in the most lovely woodland scenery, and the season for its stalking coincides with the early summer months when our English scenery is at its best.

STILL-HUNTING

Furthermore, roe have to be stalked at dawn and dusk when the woods are at their very loveliest. The fascination of stalking roe lies far beyond the urge to hunt that lies somewhere deep down inside most of us. That fascination is part of the element of poet which is found in so many fox-hunters ; a rather staggering assertion, but one which I honestly believe to be true.

And yet the roe is hardly regarded at all in this country. The number of really keen roe-stalkers is probably less than a hundred. Indeed, the number of people who could tell you the difference between roe, fallow and red deer are comparatively small. And, yet, the roe is to be found in many countries of England and in most parts of Scotland. Almost everywhere they are unpopular. Foresters dislike them because they are supposed to do great harm to plantations ; fox-hunters because they are "riot" ; keepers because they may disturb the Great God Pheasant ; farmers because they do damage to crops. Almost every man's hand is against them, and where they are not actively persecuted they are ignored. Yet I know a wood in Dorset which two understanding people made into a sanctuary for roe : to one of them that wood, alas ! is now a memorial. And what more could one want of any wood, what better memorial could any man long for, than a glimpse of those lovely little deer through the patterned shadows of green beech-leaves ?

How different is this from the treatment which roe receive on the Continent. In Germany, in Austria, in Hungary, indeed, in practically every European

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION

country except Great Britain the roe is regarded as a worthy quarry. He is carefully protected, and the honour of stalking him with the rifle is eagerly sought for. Roe-heads are honoured trophies, and opinions as to the merits of this or that specimen are eagerly canvassed. On the Continent, moreover, the forester is the roe's best friend. It is, I know, considered in England that the roe eat young trees. Anywhere near a plantation roe must be exterminated. Now I admit that certain individual old bucks will eat young trees, just as certain individual tigers will eat young women. But that all roe are tree-eaters is as untrue as that all tigers are man-eaters. I am frequently told that roe eat the trees. I reply, "Have you ever seen them do so—not one or two individual bucks, but roe as a whole, lots of them?" Much of the damage attributed to roe is really done by hares and even rabbits. But once a dog is given a bad name he is hung. These mistakes are passed down in all honesty, as any student of natural history books will know, but I, nevertheless, affirm that they are none the less mistakes. In my opinion the slaughter of roe by foresters is absolutely unjustifiable.

One of the worst offenders in this respect is the Forestry Commission, who are now one of the largest, if not the largest, landowners in Great Britain, and who as a Government concern certainly ought to know better. I am perfectly certain that if the late Lord Lovat was still at the head of the Forestry Commission the *indiscriminate* slaughter of roe would not be permitted. In those days the Forestry Commission had a soul. To-day it becomes every year

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more and more like a Government Department. If the Forestry Commission reaches that level it will be a very sad day for the estates they administer, and a sadder one still for roe, if there are any left.

No doubt, if one was to ask the heads of that department whether it was by their order that roe were being slaughtered, they would reply that there was no such order, and it certainly was not of their giving. And they would make that remark in absolute honesty. I am not going to instance the deer at Cannock in this respect, for they are not roe, but I hear of estates in many different parts of the country where their men exterminate roe at sight. Only last autumn a friend was stalking on an estate owned by the Forestry Commission. I would willingly give its name, but refrain from doing so for reasons that are easily intelligible. I was told there that there was now hardly a roe on the place, and that in one year they had killed over a hundred. Nor are many private owners any better. I have in mind now a certain part of Northumberland which is really ideal roe country and where they would do really very little harm. They are harried about there from pillar to post, and not the least by friends, or would-be friends, of fox-hunting. And yet the roe was hunted in England while the fox was still an occasional and despised vermin! Down in Dorset, perhaps the greatest stronghold of roe left in England, I know of certain woods where they are regularly shot at covert shoots, especially at the big farmers' shoots towards the end of the season. Perhaps a dozen of these delightful little animals are slaughtered in a

NATURE AT DAWN

day. And how many more get away with wounds of one sort or another. There are occasions, no doubt, when it was necessary to thin out the stock of roe. And a covert shoot, when a large number of beaters will necessarily be employed, may seem a convenient moment for it. But, as I have said in my chapter on "Lost Chances," two or three trusted guns should be told off to kill so many roe if they get the chance at close quarters. General shooting of roe should never be allowed at a covert shoot, least of all at a farmers' shoot, where twelve-bores will be discharged with gay abandon at anything within eighty yards.

But though it *may* be inevitable to shoot a few roe at covert shoots from time to time, there is only one way to kill roe which can be called sport, and that is by stalking them with a rifle. And that is sport and poetry combined. At four o'clock one is out in the country lanes with that feeling between virtue and lassitude engendered by very early rising. Although one feels that one must be the only creature on earth walking abroad at that moment, yet there is Nature going about her immemorial ways as if she has been at it since Anno Domini. Perhaps a sleepy cock pheasant on the bough (can this be the hurtling thunderbolt of December?) or a staid farm-horse stretched beneath a hedgerow, but for the rest the rabbits and the thrushes, the cows and the sheep and the pippits and the larks make their music or chew their cud till the smugness of one's virtue utterly evaporates.

Every Whitsun I go with a friend to stalk these

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roe in Dorset. It is always a struggle between the claims of the May-fly and the roe deer, and the roe deer always win. True, as we stop at Stockbridge, *en route*, and view those aristocratic trout being laid out by those aristocratic anglers, we may have a twinge of regret. Yet not for long, for those four or five days in the perfect country inn and in the loveliest countryside in all England are to me the Perfect Holiday.

Now, roe-stalking is an art not easy to acquire, and the first essential (after luck, which is, as always, the first essential) is a knowledge of the woods where one is to hunt. And those particular woods are large and confusing. It would be quite easy to lose oneself in them, not, of course, irretrievably, but for quite a long time. And, here, let me tell a tale, which I have always thought could be turned into a remarkably good short story. Would that Mr. Kipling were alive to write it! During the War there was a conscientious objector who escaped from Dorchester Gaol, or wherever such folk were detained. He was penniless and homeless, but it was high summer and he made for these great woods, and found refuge in a great tree over a fox's earth. In due course, the old vixen returned carrying a rabbit for her cubs. Our friend dropped a stone on her back. She dropped the rabbit in a flash and made off. Thereupon, he descended, got a fire going with two bits of dry wood, and cooked the rabbit. And thus with what the vixen brought him, and snaring, and turnips and potatoes from the fields, and water from the brook, he lived for three weeks, though

WOODLAND MISTS

searchers passed constantly under his lair like the Roundheads beneath Penderell's Oak.

Well, it is in these great woods that we hunted our roe. This friend of mine knew them well ; he knew just those glades which the various bucks would work, he knew many of the bucks by sight. It is an amazing thing how an old roe will stick to his own little patch, repelling all invaders, and how, if he is shot, within a fortnight a new buck will take its place. Slowly, silently, our glasses working all the time, we would pass down those misty rides. Sometimes a shadowy figure would flit across in front of us, a doe, perhaps, or small buck. Sometimes the deer would pause for a moment and gaze at us while we stood silent in the middle of the ride. Cautiously avoiding all sudden movement, we would raise our glasses and look a buck over, for only the best heads would do. That is half the charm of roe-stalking in woodlands where there is a fair head of deer. One may see, perhaps, a dozen bucks or does in a couple of days and get not more than one shot. Then we could come to some clearing which we knew of old almost invariably held roe. Nor were we disappointed as a rule. We would sit down and get busy with our glasses, and usually within the hour there would be a movement, an angry bark perhaps, and the little buck would come nosing out into his fastness. Then would begin calculations of time and space and wind, and more often than not the roe would be off before we could get a shot.

Actually, on the last Whitsun visit that we paid, I shot a really fine head, one of the best, I suppose,

STILL HUNTING

that has been shot in the south of England since the War. Yet there is no credit to me in it, absolutely none whatever. We were walking through a clearing when suddenly two bucks sprang into the road about fifty yards ahead of us. It was my turn to take the shot. Up went my friend's glasses. "He's dam' good," he hissed. I fired and missed. The roe bounded on for thirty yards, and paused again. I fired again and got him, though on that first miss I certainly didn't deserve him, and there was no question of having spied for that buck, or stalked him, or anything else. No other question, indeed, save that of luck. And yet that head now hangs above my desk ; it is one of Rowland Ward's greatest successes, and everybody looks at it and thinks how clever I am. For it has every one of the qualities of the good roe-head. It is ten inches in length, with six long sharp points. And the horns, especially round the coronets, are rough and thick and pearly. My friend has stalked and shot scores of roe since the War. He is one of the small band of roe enthusiasts, and when a man becomes a roe enthusiast he is more maniacal about his particular hobby, I think, than any other class of sportsmen I know. I do not think he has ever shot a better head than that ; hardly one as good. And yet this incident pales before the shooting of one of the best roe that has ever been killed in these islands, a magnificent head of eleven and a quarter inches.

A young man, who had never in his life fired a shot out of a rifle at an animal, went up to stay on a property in Morayshire where there are very good

THE RECORD ROE

roe to be shot. They said to him, "Would you like to try for a roe?" He said, "Nothing better." They gave him a couple of sighting-shots, and packed him off. Less than half an hour from home a roe came out and had a look at him, quite close. He then realized that he didn't know what part of the beast to aim at. However, thinking no doubt of Harold at Hastings, he chose the eye. He hit the roe through the head, and thus bagged a perfect roe.

To me not the least of the charms of roe-stalking is that it can be done alone. Although I love the companionship and good fellowship of the trek or the camp-fire, I love no less the solitude of an unaccompanied hunt. Long hours by oneself are the best way of getting one's thoughts into perspective, and in the midday hours, between the evening and the morning hunts, one can lie on one's back in the beech-mast, and eat one's sandwiches, and gaze into the blue sky, and wonder whether one will spend the next two hours wondering about time and eternity, or whether one will pull that book from one's pocket (God bless the publisher of the Penguin Books!). And then, is there any satisfaction quite akin to spying and stalking and skinning and carrying home one's beast entirely unaided? And this last is no small consideration. For having slain the Ongy Bongy in the middle of the wood, one has still to get the Ongy Bongy out of the wood. For two it is comparatively easy. One has only to cut a good tough bough and carry him out like the returning Israelites bearing the giant bunch of grapes to Joshua. But for one man to drag a roe buck, even after the gralloch, perhaps

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a mile to a mile and a half to the nearest spot to which a car can come, is a considerable effort. But, I think that the sense of satisfaction as one deposits one's quarry by the Inn door, or outside the keeper's cottage, would compensate for bearing up all the burdens of Atlas.

But there are many other occasions in other countries when I look back to still-hunting experiences with less pleasure. There is an incident connected with a cow bison in Orissa, which is still a very painful memory, despite the magnanimity of the forest officer to whom I had to report it. There was the biggest sambhur I ever saw, who suddenly appeared while I was busy watching a sounder of pig through my glasses, gazed at me placidly till I began to edge towards my rifle, and then made off slowly, but just quick enough to prevent me getting a shot. There was the mule deer, a fine mule deer, which next to the chital is the most beautiful deer in the world, who stood and looked at me in British Columbia just long enough for me to miss him. And there are two, if not three, tigers that I have been able to approach by daylight and on foot.

This method of shooting tigers is to my mind by far the most sporting, by far the most interesting, and, incidentally, by far the most economical. Elephants, of course, are the prerogative of the Vice-regal, but beaters are often difficult to get, and an expensive item in the poor man's balance sheet. I have been lucky enough to have done quite a lot of big-game shooting for a young man in the early thirties, and I can assure my readers that I have never been any-

IN THE MIDDAY SUN

thing but a poor man. To travel, to shoot, I have had to make use of every sort of financial contrivance, and to study means of outwitting my quarry, which, if not ideal, were at least cheap. So may I commend the system of killing a tiger which I call "walking up the water-holes."

As is well known, after a kill a tiger will go to water and probably lie up in or near the first available shade near those water-holes. If the sportsman, supported by one or two retainers, makes for these likely spots during the heat of the noonday, he is more than likely to find the tiger lying up asleep. In the hot weather the available water is generally in a chain of pools down a well-defined nallah bed, and in the shady sides of such ravines a tiger will not infrequently be found in the heat of the noon-day. A cautious approach, of course, is necessary ; tennis shoes, for instance, will be a suitable footgear, but the chances are that if one treads softly one is likely to see the tiger before he sees you.

It has often been held up to me as a very fool-hardy proceeding, but I cannot altogether agree with this opinion. Of course, if one treads on the tiger's tail or meets a man-eater in an exceedingly straight place—well, there it is. But even if the tiger sees you first, which shouldn't happen, his first instinct will be to make off. He may give a snarl, or he may not, but live and let live is the instinct of the jungle. The first tiger I ever saw was still hunting through a jungle south of Belgaum. I and my tracker were picking our noiseless way through the trees hoping for something to turn up, when suddenly through

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the low mist on the ground—it was during the monsoon—a tiger suddenly appeared about forty yards off. I gazed at him and he gazed at me for about ten seconds, and then he faded out like a cinema kiss, before I'd even cocked my rifle. I was left speechless with amazement, chagrin and surprise. Here, thought I, is the first tiger that ever I shall see, and I have not even had a shot at him. I was younger then. I remember that at the time it seemed absolutely criminal. My friends, those of them who had shot a tiger, at least, would regard me as a laughing-stock. Possibly even as a coward. I was bitterly chagrined. The next tiger I came across on foot was at ten o'clock in the morning, making a hearty, if incautious, meal off one of my kills. He paid the penalty. I have already told the story. The third occasion was one of a number of these hunts I made during a short hot-weather visit to the Central Provinces.

I had had a tiger kill and was stalking along the water-holes at midday, with one shikari. Slowly, silently, with an expression somewhere between the wistful and the furtive, we made our way across baking ravines and through parched, almost shadeless, trees. Suddenly we walked round the corner and there was the tiger fast asleep. He had made a good meal off our kill the night before, and now he was digesting it. Now all that remained to do was to withdraw silently under cover of a rock and take a shot at close range at some vital spot. He was only about eight yards off at the time, and even a heart-shot might bring him on top of us, the more so as he was facing in our direction. But if we were to

A FRIGHTENED SHIKARI

remove behind cover, say twenty yards, we were in a reasonably safe position, as he would probably make off if we did not kill him dead (which was improbable at that range), and even if he charged we could probably get in one more shot before he closed. Actually, just as I was walking backwards to my vantage point, the shikari lost his head and shouted to frighten the tiger who made off with miraculous speed. There is nothing that upsets an animal more than the human voice. I may add that it was some time before I ceased to exercise my own vocal cords on the shikari! However, the incident shows that with any luck there is a reasonably good chance of bagging a tiger sportingly and expeditiously in this way, provided one moves silently, makes a sound calculation as to his whereabouts, taking into consideration where he dined and drank, and, when viewed, takes a careful and deliberate shot, if possible from behind cover. Finally, remember a beast will not normally attack one without provocation, and if one fires at him facing away from one he will usually make off in the same direction.

There are two fine beasts of the American continent whose pursuit is that of typical still-hunting, the moose and the caribou. It is not for me to stand in judgment in this matter as I have never shot a caribou, and only one moose, and that was not a Rowland Ward specimen. But except in the case of magnificent antlers such as those of the tremendous heads which Major C. E. Radclyffe brought back from Alaska and Kamchatka, which one would travel anywhere to get, I do not know that I very much

S T I L L - H U N T I N G

want to shoot another. Yet, I know so little about the business that it is, perhaps, unfair to say so. But the moose seems to be, from what I have seen and heard, so confiding a fellow that it seems a shame to knock over that huge carcass, that mountain of meat, without just cause. When I was in Canada, I was riding through the forest one day and a young bull moose came and had a good look at me, and then followed me down the track. But I freely admit that to bag a really fine head would probably mean long hours of work in difficult conditions, and a quarry that will not wait to be shot !

It is, perhaps, foolish to decry still-hunting as opposed to stalking, for one might as well say that polo is better fun than pig-sticking, or that you preferred Goya to Velasquez. Where all are good comparisons do, indeed, become odious. It is perhaps as profitless as to discuss the age-old question, so much canvassed in Club bars in India, of which is the greater fun, hill or plain shooting. That is a thing on which I confess I have views of my own, even if they profit me little. My heart was early wedded to the high hills, and there is no prospect of a divorce. Equally fallacious, in my opinion, are the criticisms usually levelled at Scottish stalking by those whose chief experience lies in the Himalayas : that it is too easy, too mannered, that the stalker does all the work. The contrast that he draws of his own experiences is often stirring. But is it always a fair one ? Here are some of the considerations which appeal to the mind of one who has taken great pleasure in both forms of stalking.

HIGHLANDS AND HIMALAYAS

Firstly, to thoroughly enjoy stalking, one's joy must be unconfined. Although, say, a Ladak ammon block is not so much bigger than the largest forests in Scotland, one has not the ever-present feeling of the march, the knowledge of that bit of sheep ground below. There all overseas stalking that I know of scores. The world is one's parish. But the very presence of the march may make stalking far harder. Secondly, in the Himalayas, the country is generally more difficult, though not always, and the winds at least as hard. In Central Asia, for instance, they are a good deal harder.

Thirdly, is the quarry more sagacious? Now, those who have stalked in the Himalayas or in Northern America usually dismiss red deer with a gesture of contempt. Now I admit that the hardest stalking abroad is far harder than the hardest stalking at home, both as regards quarry and terrain. Your big-horn, your *ovis ammon*, above all, probably, your markhor. But, after all, they represent the muckle harts, as it were, of overseas stalking. But what of the lesser Himalayan heads? Can it honestly be said that stalk for stalk they were more difficult than red deer? I have not found it my experience.

Divest one's mind of prejudice, let there be no need to impress the stay-at-homes by Schiehallion with the glories of Nanga Parbat, and one must admit that many of one's stalks after bhurrel, or Punjab oorial, or blackbuck, or chinkara on the plains were rather easy. One admits that there are many easy stalks in the Highlands. Yet there are always as many hard ones, and there are many fine beasts

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that are sought through the whole season and live to throw another head. The opinion that I voice is a purely personal one, but I have not found Scottish stalking as easy as many people make out. To take long shots, to shoot the trash, yes, that is easy ; but to find your muckle hart and kill it under really sporting conditions, setting a hundred yards as the range one aspires to fire at—that is another question.

A further point held out against Scottish stalking is that it largely takes place in the rut, when the beasts, being fully occupied with their own affairs, are much easier to approach ; and that this is not the case in the best Himalayan stalking, which goes on all the year round. Yet does it ? In Ladak there is, to all intents and purposes, a four-months' season ; in Baltistan there is a five-months' season ; while for markhor there is really only a two-months' season, markhor shooting in the second leave generally being a needle-in-the-haystack business. Now I will go so far as to say that if you cross the Zogi-La early enough, when the heads are kept really low by snow, shooting a markhor is far easier (though still hard), and shooting a good ibex definitely easy.

No ; it is not here, I think, that stalking abroad has the greater charm. I, personally, believe that stalking abroad is on the whole more difficult, but not so much more difficult. The opinion is based on a personal experience of no immoderate length, and is of no particular value. Far be it from me to be pontifical on such issues ! No—the charm of the overseas stalking lies in the camp life, the lack of restraint, the sense of freedom. One must, even in



SAMBHUUK AT A MALAYAN SALT TICK

This beautiful picture was taken by Mr. Theodore Hubbard

CAMP LIFE

Caithness, return home to dine in a lodge which probably has a billiard table, and where two days' growth of beard is not in the mode. But take yourself to Hanlé, or the Kootenays, or Lake Bangweolo, and you are back with primitive man. Almost one begins to paint oneself with woad ! If the Highlands of Scotland were still a land of virgin forest waiting for you to stalk really wild red deer (for the laird has only condescended to stalk, broadly speaking, in the last 150 years), as St. John pursued his muckle hart for three days, then, I think, the ammon rams might well skip upon their high hills.

There, for me, is the lure. It is not so for all. For this reason or that there are many who prefer more mannered methods. Let them not, like Walter Scott, embarking on *Ivanhoe*, be put off by any traveller who has cast his shoe across Edom. Let them enjoy the red deer, as he is, at his best, a worthy quarry.

CHAPTER X

AUSTRIAN INTERLUDE

IF still-hunting and stalking need to be compared, there is no country, at any rate so close to London, where the comparison can be made as expeditiously as in Austria, and so I made up my mind to go out and see something of the shooting there. To the keen big-game shot there is nothing more interesting than the collection of specimens of certain groups, or families or species, and in that country I stood the chance of shooting two new species, the Styrian stag and the chamois. I had already stalked half a dozen different members of the deer family, and I had pursued three notable relations of the chamois, the rocky mountain goat and the Himalayan tahr and gooral. Comparisons we know are odious, but we are all delighted to make them.

The deer family, though generally easier to stalk than the capridæ, are to me intriguing for this reason. Your true deer is a forest dweller. Yet we are inclined to consider all stags in terms of Scotland. We imagine that every deer is to be found and stalked on the open hillside. Actually the Scottish red deer is the only stag in the world, I think, that lives in the open. All other stags, broadly speaking, live in or just above woods. I do avoid the word forests so that no ardent Northern Briton can misunderstand

AN ANCIENT TRADITION

me. Therefore, stalking is not really the term to apply to any stag outside Scotland. For stalking, as we have agreed in Chapter III, means the spy and approach in the open. The New Zealand stag, which I have never shot, like the barasingh of Cashmere, is often shot in the open, but the forest is there.

Now to get any animal out of a forest, whether he be a bongo or a barking deer, is all too often like looking for a needle in a haystack. Thus the shooting of the stag must normally be during the rutting season, when if one cannot see him one can at least hear him. And in about the middle of September—that very experienced hunter, Sir Robert Pigot, places the date exactly as the 15th—the orchestra tunes up, and until then it is very little use hunting the stag. It is very necessary to make this point, because English sportsmen, still with the Scottish parallel at the back of their minds, are apt to consider the “decoying” of deer by a false call to be unsporting. Actually the decoying of deer in the rut by answering their challenge is practised in most parts of the world in a rough and ready manner.

In Central Europe, where the tradition of hunting is more ancient and honourable than in any other part of the world, it has been brought to a fine art. The Austrian *jäger* with his horn is, in his own way, as great an artist as the Highland stalker at the spy and crawl game, and that is saying quite a lot. One does not try cacophony in a Highland forest, because it would not work, and it would not be particularly sporting if it did. In Austria it is almost an essential,

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and, to me, it seemed that it would be very interesting indeed to watch experts practising this method.

Accordingly I arranged to go out to Austria and had the good fortune to shoot over the preserves of Prince Elie Bourbon-Parma at Gschöder in Styria. One feels always on these expeditions that one is setting off into the Unknown, in a way that one never would if Tomiebeg were one's destination. Yet, in point of fact, Imperial Airways to-day take us to the Austrian Shooting Grounds as quickly as you and I normally travel to Sutherland or Caithness. I myself left London at eight o'clock, reached Vienna the same day, and was at Gschöder, near Maria Zell in the Styrian Alps, late that night.

At Gschöder, Prince Elie Bourbon-Parma and his predecessors have done everything possible to keep the stalking on this large property at a very high level. There is on the estate a great acreage of woodland covering the lower slopes of the mountains, which is the home of the Styrian stag. This fine beast must not be confused with the Carpathian stag, a heavier animal carrying a grander head. Above these forests rises the open hillside up to the mountain-tops. It is these mountain-tops that are the home of the chamois, though one will also see chamois lower down in the woods.

As the car began to ascend the hills, and I entered a country of pinewoods and cascades and deep gorges and cool green mountain-tops, my spirits rose. I felt exactly the same exhilaration that I used to feel about fifty miles beyond Kohala, Uri, Chenari, Ghari—the dak bungalows seemed to be flitting past.

SIMPLE FOLK

Here there were no dak bungalows, but little pastoral villages, and the wayside shrines and images, with the simple bunches of country flowers adorning them.

Late at night we arrived at the very comfortable lodge and were warmly welcomed by Prince Elie, a sportsman of the very best type. My German is negligible, my French is of the public school bijou-chou-and-all-other-plurals-in-ous order (pace C. R. L. Ford), and Prince Elie speaks no English. Still we found that the ardour of the chase constitutes an esperanto, and I think we got on very well.

I slept well that night. I was to start my shooting under conditions than which there were none more favourable in Central Europe—and, in addition, in magnificent mountain scenery, and amid a delightful and very simple people. Why is it that the English shooting man takes so readily to hillmen of any colour, class, or creed? Here, in these secluded valleys—although the Viennese radio occasionally pursued—one was able to forget the word Abyssinia had ever existed.

At Gschöder, most sportsmen, unless they are trying for a stag on one of the near-in beats, go up to one of the really charming huts high up in the mountains. Here your jäger will look after you, and show you that he can not only call up a stag but cook an omelette. And Augustus Grimble would not have asked for more.

When we arrived the real rut had not begun, though there was a good deal of intermittent calling. The method of hunting is to be out at dawn on the

AUSTRIAN INTERLUDE

hillside, and to try to locate a roar such as betokens a master stag. One then gets as near as possible, answering roar for roar as one approaches, to keep him vocal. If one is lucky one may get a glimpse of him through the trees. Far more likely one has to sit down and "move" him, as there are certain to be hinds about. Not our way of doing things, but a real art, and I, personally, have no patience with contemptuous fellow-countrymen. He is too scornful, our fellow Briton, of all the ceremony with which the stalking is infested. He forgets, if he ever knew, that the pioneers of our own stalking history, St. John, Horatio Ross, and their contemporaries, are parvenus in comparison to the honourable traditions of continental sport. Was not the first treatise on stalking of which we know written by Maximillian of Austria in 1499? And from him the Apostolic Succession of hunters, whether their medium be honest yew or vile saltpetre, remains unbroken: while it is, perhaps, curious that a nation which demands so excessive a formalism in the chase of a mere vermin like the fox, should grudge a little of pomp and circumstance to the obsequies of a Royal Hart.

Out we went, early in the morning. "Weitmann's Heil" had been the greeting of my host. "Weitmann's Heil" had cried my jäger, Hubert, a powerful and handsome young man, son of the head jäger of the property. He was wearing the traditional dress of the Tyrol—a short, double-breasted coat with green frogs, a felt hat with the shaving brush of the chamois bart, and a black-cock's feather adorning the

GROSSE HIRSCH

back of it, leather shorts and thick hob-nailed boots. I thought how much Joseph Sedley would have liked the get-up. But he would not have cared for the heavy ruck-sack which Hubert donned without a murmur, and hardly seemed to notice as he went striding up the hill. Our food and my luggage was carried by an amiable Fritz or Johann who staggered up the hill under a colossal load as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Still with the burden of four months of London weighing me down, I hardly made better progress than our two-legged garron. It was a lovely, cloudless day, and, with every step upward, the view across the gorge to the other side of the valley became more remarkable. But when, finally, we reached a shady glade at the top of the mountain (I had already, to my chagrin, been deluded by several false tops), I was not sorry to see Hubert put off his ruck-sack and sit down. I stretched out on the grass and turned my eyes to the blue sky. They closed, opened again, and closed. I slept. Twenty minutes later Hubert woke me and we passed on into the forest. Suddenly above us there was a scramble. Hubert gripped my arm. Three hinds came out and then—"Hirsch, grosse Hirsch," hissed Hubert. A stag, a big stag, I could see. Before I could even consider whether or not I was to shoot him he had gone back into the forest. If those were the chances I was to get I thought it might not be so easy as some people imagined.

The hut was as comfortable as could be, with a little outer compartment for the jäger and an inner

AUSTRIAN INTERLUDE

one for me. A comfortable bed, chairs, a table, everything one could want. I enjoyed my time there enormously—every minute of it. Hubert proved to be a most admirable cook, as I soon had found my true pedestrian—or should I say Alpinist?—form. But in the whole of the first three of the four days we had determined to stop in that hut we never saw a stag save once, and that a fleeting glance of a small beast. On the third night, in the half light of evening, we got up to quite a big stag. We had heard him roaring for a couple of hours, and, as we had been industriously doing for the three previous days, we answered him roar for roar. Finally, he moved. For a good half-hour we had been within seventy yards of him. If only we could get a shot! Hubert pointed. I could see his tines—I think he was a royal—but only his ears and eyes were exposed: but half a pace forward and he would bring the whole neck into view. But he did not give it. His head gave a heave, ducked under a branch, and we could hear him making off down the hill.

We had piped to him and he had not danced, and now there was only one more morning in which he could tread a measure. I surveyed the tin horn, rather like the elongated rose of a watering-pot, with which Hubert made his music with despair! I would stalk anything on an open hill, but I couldn't get this needle out of the haystack. I thought, not without sympathy, of the sportsman from Vienna who had called his stag all the evening, to turn round and find a second beast surveying him from fifty yards behind with placid astonishment. I recalled



TYPICAL CHAMOIS GROUND

CALLING A STAG

with greater pleasure the story of the two gentlemen of Munich who spent their time serenading each other across a valley with great assiduity. I was not alone in my misfortunes.

Morning came. In the half light of dawn Hubert's "Weitmann's Heil" came too optimistically I thought. We heard as we left the hut a stag, a big stag we judged him, roaring in the forest not very far off. In half an hour we were up to him, quite close, for we could hear him in the trees above us. Then, there would be a silence—as of a man waiting for the next hiccough—and we would pause fearful that he had made off, and then, once more, the reassuring roar.

We were within three hundred yards of him in the forest, but alas ! he was surrounded by an ample zenana. Behind him was a cliff and to the right another. It was all too clearly a case for Mahomed to beckon the mountain. For two hours we answered his challenge. Every time he roared Hubert seemed to answer his note. But we could not move him. Twice a hind passed across the glade in front, gazed enquiringly in our direction, and passed on : but their lord remained immovable. I urged Hubert to attempt a flank approach : such methods were within my ken, but he was certain they would spell disaster. Then a real stag opened up and I felt certain that our quarry would be led away to battle and escape us. And then there was a sickening pause when all Hubert's arts remained unanswered, and I felt sure he must have gone. Finally came a roar more challenging than any we had yet heard, followed by a succession of enraged grunts. Hubert's horn gave

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angry response. One could hardly tell the difference. There was a pause and then another closer roar. Was he coming? Then the bushes parted. There was no need to discuss those massive antlers, nor was it possible to miss him broadside on seventy yards away: and as the trigger came back he toppled over dead upon the grass.

Up jumped Hubert and made me the lowest of low bows. "Weitmann's *glück*," he cried. "Danke *gleichfalls*," said I, who had learnt my piece. We ran forward. The stag gave a last convulsive heave and lay still.

His were the horns of the typical forest stag, standing upright with little of span, but black and gnarled and massive. It was a fine head in length and beam, with good tops, but it was spoilt by the weak brows. It had but the eight points, and the head rather recalled to me that of a sambhur. But it was a nice head, though definitely not a perfect one. For that, in my opinion, is the royal head of beam and more especially span. By a royal head I mean a head whose tops make a cup of three points on both sides and not just a twelve-pointer. Heads with more than twelve points have not the same appeal to me as the simple royal.

Well, we had killed our stag: a bough was plucked from a neighbouring tree and dipped in its blood and put in my button-hole. My hat was not the right variety to receive it. Thus and thus did we return to the hut to make arrangements for our beast to be brought in. We were greeted as we descended the hill with every token of ceremonial

FRANCIS JOSEPH THE SPORTSMAN

congratulation. The killing of a royal hart in a countryside where every cottager has a picture of St. Hubert is not merely a matter for interested comment.

The next day I went up to the higher ground on the other side of the valley where the best chamois ground lay, and this was the part of my holiday that I was really looking forward to. The calling up of a stag had been interesting enough. But to stalk a chamois on the open hillside, that was far, far better. It was the chamois which was the favoured quarry of the Emperor Francis Joseph, who had, I believed, killed over 1,000 in his long life. His picture, with that of a stag killed on his eightieth birthday, hangs to-day in the homes of countless peasants in Styria, who are royalists to a man. He disliked the more artificial shooting of his great Lainser-Park reserve on the outskirts of Vienna. I visited the park myself and found there boar, fallow and red deer of remarkable development, and mouflon transported from Sardinia which have far outgrown their native cousins, in the better feeding of the Park. The word "park" perhaps hardly gives an impression of this great estate as it covers some 12,000 acres on the outskirts of Vienna. The ranger very kindly took us round in his official car, one of the old Imperial pre-war vehicles which seemed to me the vastest and tallest private motor that can ever have been made! While I am on the subject it may be interesting to note here that some of these mouflon have been turned out on the bare hillsides of a few Styrian estates, where, I doubt not, they offer first-class stalking on ground proper to a stalk. But in

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general they do not agree with the chamois, and are not encouraged.

On the chamois ground I had a new jäger: older than Hubert, and smaller, but equally active and knowledgeable: he was as good as any stalker I have ever seen anywhere. The hut where we were to stay the night was in a great bare cup of the hills, and when we arrived there an old buck chamois was feeding on the hillside about 500 yards away. One could see him perfectly through glasses: the little patches on his face standing out as distinctively as those of a roan antelope. However, no sooner had we moved into the basin than he got our wind and made off, with dignity and with deliberation, but without any tendency to loiter.

As most of my readers will probably be aware, the vast majority of continental sportsmen use telescopic sights. Now, there are many arguments in favour of using telescopic sights: of late years even Major Gerald Burrard, the greatest living writer on British firearms, has been converted to them, but I must confess that I myself don't care about them. I cannot rehearse here the arguments for and against their use. I have no desire to be drawn into any of those half-dozen controversies about rifles, in which nobody ever convinces anybody else, and which, so often, seem likely to lead to bloodshed. Personally, I have an old-fashioned prejudice against them, as I feel that Messrs. Holland & Holland with their .375 Magnum have made me quite deadly enough, and that it is up to me to make an approach close enough to make a killing shot at least a reasonable

USE OF GROUND

certainty. But the British sportsman who wishes to approach to 150 yards, and under, must make this perfectly clear to his jäger before he starts.

My first stalk was a fiasco. We had tried to get up to two different bucks which were still in the basin where the hut stood, but without success. Then Herman led me out of the basin, and after a good deal of spying he descried a master buck about a mile away. The wind, which was blowing in strong and fitful gusts, made it impossible for us to make any approach direct. So Herman led me round, perhaps half a mile, to a spot whence we could again view our buck. But I had lost him, and our efforts to elucidate the situation in German failed signally. I motioned Herman on, and we continued to advance. Our advance was that of Wellington's army on Badajoz. We moved this way and that, to right and to left, all the time gaining a little in our efforts to make ground unobserved. Herman hugged every hillock and every contour of every hillock, now crawling, now stooping, and now, under full cover, stretching himself in respite. Finally, with some deliberation he handed me the rifle and urged me forward. I will be quite frank. I had entirely lost direction, and I had no more idea at all of where the quarry was or how we got to it. It was the sort of a stalk that is always held up to us as how not to do it, when the "gentleman" knows nothing of what's going on, and the stalker does everything except fire the shot.

I pushed my way a little on to the ridge. Eighty yards in front was a low line of hillocks; beyond,

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perhaps 150 yards off, rose the high wall of the mountain. I surveyed it carefully. I pulled out my glasses and surveyed it again, but nowhere could I see the chamois. Whispers, German and English whispers, each perfectly unintelligible to the other, followed. Still I could not see him—I who rather pride myself that I have quick eyes. I raked the hillside with my glasses. Again no sign of anything, anywhere. It was clear to me as daylight that poor gesticulating Herman regarded me as a blind imbecile. We withdrew under cover. He produced a piece of paper and drew a crude plan. Then I suddenly realized that the chamois was on the hillock in front, almost under my nose, while I had been scanning remoter and still remoter vistas of the hill behind. And here was I who had arrived in Austria, and been introduced to these *jägers* as the world-travelled hunter, behaving like a half-wit loon. It is not often that I feel as deflated as I did at that moment. I wished I hadn't adopted quite that air of easy confidence on arrival!

I crawled back into position. It was an easy shot. The sort of shot that I can say without fear of conceit I—or anyone else for that matter—could bring off ninety-nine times in a hundred. I have never taken a shot with more complete confidence. Now, I would show them what I can do. I missed him clean. With a neat kick of his little heels, the chamois disappeared from view. *Never* have I felt so deflated as I did at that moment. Your Austrian *jäger*, as I have already said, is Nature's gentleman. The way in which Herman passed it all off was beyond

A BIG CHAMOIS

praise, but I was in no mood just then for noticing the nuances of polite behaviour. We made our way home.

Next morning we started early and made off in the opposite direction. It had turned cold in the night, and there was the frosty nip of autumn in the hills. Now, said Herman, the rut will begin in earnest, and stags will soon be roaring all over the valley. The sun which had mellowed the hillside yesterday was overcast, and the clouds were coming down. It looked like snow. Two hours later we had sighted another big buck: big, said Herman, but not as big as yesterday's. (The corner of my mouth dropped.) He was high up the mountain-side, and the wind, such as it was, was with us. The approach was not difficult when once we were within 300 yards of him, as one was offered the cover of a convenient ridge; but till one reached that ridge there seemed no alternative to advancing flat over the open.

Bending double, we began an approach by bounds. When the buck's head went down we hurried forward. As soon as he ceased cropping and turned to look for more we froze in our tracks. Once or twice his glance seemed to sear right through us, and our hearts missed a beat. But, finally, we reached the cover of the lower ridge with the wind still blowing in our faces. We advanced as far up as we could till we came to a clump of rocks, beyond which, if we wished to go farther, we would have had to take to the open again: and that seemed tempting Providence too far. Anyhow, there was the chamois about 200 yards off, and it was quite

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clear that I was expected to have a crack at it. Now, I don't usually shoot at more than 150 yards, though I am fairly confident of hitting at longer ranges, say, up to 200 yards. But it was clear enough that if I had refused to shoot here what little reputation I had left would soon be gone. Besides, it was a chance that most reasonable shots would have taken. I squeezed the trigger and the chamois fell dead.

Herman, of course, was ecstatic in his praises. It was clear that my reputation had been re-established. (He had previously and pathetically offered to lend me his telescopically-sighted rifle!) Never, apparently, had there been such target practice or a Mightier Hunter before the Lord. The chamois was dragged to the bottom of the hill. He was a fine old buck of just under ten inches. Herman skilfully excised the ridge of hair running down the backbone, the highly prized *bart*, much more highly thought of by the Austrian sportsman than the horns. It was not yet at its full winter's length, but he promised to make me, at least, a simulacrum of a shaving-brush. And so back down the hill to the lodge.

It might be interesting to draw some comparison here between the tahr, the chamois, and the Rocky Mountain goat. The tahr and the chamois are both stalked just above the forest level as a rule, the goat almost always in completely open country. If asked to decide which lives in the most inaccessible country, I should say the tahr. He lives on ground only a little less difficult than the markhor, and by far the hardest climbing I have ever known was after markhor, though the actual stalk of my best markhor

A STALKING COMPARISON

was comparatively easy. For personal wariness, I think I would award the palm to the chamois; my reason for this is that I think he is the most sophisticated of these three, and the one that best knows what the nasty smell that is man means. One notices the same thing about the Rocky Mountain goat: a nanny or young billy may appear easy, an almost inane quarry. But an old billy who has been shot at is a really worth-while proposition.

And which of these three would I rather shoot? Well, drawing experience from my own past, I was prouder of my big billy from the head of the Palliser River almost than any other trophy I have ever secured. Firstly, he was a fine old solitary billy. And secondly, his shooting was entirely my own work; I never had any help with him from anybody. I had left camp at dawn: I quartered the hillside, spying, till noon. Then I picked him up and I stalked him, shot him, skinned him, and carried his head and "robe" (anglicé—"skin") back to camp, entirely myself. Nobody was with me throughout, and I kindle to that snow-white head, which Rowland Ward mounted quite beautifully, as to very few others in a collection which the modest wall space of myself, my friends and my relations seems to be finding increasingly difficult to house.

Finally, I might venture the opinion that your Austrian jäger is probably the better stalker, your Canadian guide the better hunter, and that your Cashmere shikari of the best type is the most loyal servant in the world.

There is one final peculiarity of shooting in Austria,

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if one is not a private guest, and that is that one does not pay by results. There is no question of putting down £7,000 for Strath Haggis or Glen Pibroch. (Readers need not scoff; that is actually a figure which, to my knowledge, had been paid for the renting of a Scottish property for the shooting season.) One pays by results. When one has shot one's stag, or one's chamois, one pays for it, and not before. Furthermore, one pays for one's stag by his points. Thus, to quote a fairly general figure, the charge is fifty Austrian schillings (£2) a point. A ten-pointer, therefore, costs £20, or so. I have often drawn a pleasing mental picture of the parsimonious sportsmen shooting over the back of a stag of fourteen points! A chamois would cost about £8.

Of course, one would have to pay, if one shot nothing, for one's board and lodging, say ten shillings a day all in, and a modest tip to the keepers. There is none of the "paper-only-on-this-moor" spirit in the Austrian Highlands. Nor, must I confess, have I ever found it among those of Northern Britain. So it is not a very expensive holiday if one merely wants to shoot one or two good heads, and to make a qualitative and not a quantitative bag, as all good sportsmen should. And to those of us who have loved the glorious scenery and magnificent stalking of Cashmere and fear, by our English firesides, that we shall never see them again, it offers a chance of making in another, but a very similar form, those same contacts. So I look back to those days in Styria with a glow of pleasure. I look forward to their future renewal. "Weitmann's Heil!"

CHAPTER XI

TWO GREAT STALKERS

I HAVE written of many very happy days I have had shooting and trekking in different parts of the world, and at the end of my book must say something of the men who made this sport possible, because I believe that there are many of us who think of our hunting days in terms of our shikaris. Whatever his colour, race or creed, the best type of professional hunter is almost always an extremely sympathetic character. Personally, I divide hunting grounds into two categories, countries where the white man takes up his own burden, and those where it is done for him by perspiring blacks. The Americas and New Zealand on the one hand, and India and Africa on the other. In the former the shooting is tough: unless one is very plutocratic one must hump one's own blanket, carry one's own rifle, fetch and carry, hew wood, and draw water. At certain temperatures one must hew water. In Africa, for a comparatively small sum of money, one can hire illimitable labour. In "white man's countries" one has to pay a great deal more for labour, and very rightly so. One's stalker cannot feed on a handful of rice or a pound of flour. Therefore, one's requirements must be cut down to a minimum. Further, being white man's countries, these localities are generally more healthy than some parts of India or Africa. That is a generalization, but

TWO GREAT STALKERS

whether one prefers the one to the other is purely a matter of taste. As a generalization again, one must choose between Dog-Loyalty and Intelligent Companionage. If one understands the customs and language of a country, what can be more delightful than the Indian shikari or African tracker or gun-bearer. Yet who can be a more stimulating companion than your Canadian guide, never failing to criticize in the most outspoken manner when it is necessary, always cheerful, with the absolutely unprejudiced mind of a "new" country, hardworking, tireless, efficient, a store of hunting lore. I like to think of these countries in the terms of friends I have made there, and I am glad in doing it to pay some tribute to those men who have made my sport, and taught me all I know of big-game hunting. And of them I will single out two—Mahomed Khan, who directed my virgin Indian efforts, and Frank Philipps, my Canadian guide. Of Musia, R. J. D. Salmon's gun-bearer, I write at the end of this book.

I first met Mahomed Khan when I went to shoot my first oorial. It was the first four-footed thing I had ever shot larger than a hare. I was not yet twenty-one, and I knew rather less about the business than the police do of the ordinary trunk mystery. I was incredibly young, incredibly keen and incredibly ignorant. Mahomed Khan had never before met a Sahib who combined these qualities in the same startling degree. He treated me with paternal deference, as a widowed Prince Consort might treat his reigning son. He took it upon himself to see to my stalking education.

A MUSSULMAN SAGE

He had the most superb dignity, even for an elder of a Mussulman village. Of medium height he was, but he held himself like a lance at rest, if ever any of Kipling's heroes did. He had the hooked nose and the flashing glance of an eagle ; indeed, his dark and saturnine face more closely recalled a great golden eagle than any countenance I have ever seen. I recall though that the eagle was sometimes a dove. His delight over my first oorial was quite unbounded, greater, if possible, than my own. And he always bore with me when I missed ; while never had there been such a shot when I hit. I have told the story elsewhere.

In those days I was always hard up. Every sort of economy had to be resorted to to save the final rupee. Mahomed Khan—sly old man—would explain at length the Machiavellian diplomacy that saved a rupee on our pack bullocks, and hold forth interminably on the discomforts which he put up with out of love for the Sahib. He knew quite well that it was bread cast on the waters, and that, ultimately, he would be suitably, even extravagantly, rewarded. He would visit me on occasions in my quarters in 'Pindi, and my servants would vie to do him honour, for it was a means of winning favour with their Lord. Mahomed Khan enjoyed this not a little. The old man had a sense of the importance of the outward manifestations of honour, like all Indians ; and a very right and proper thing, too. And I think that they tickled his sense of humour, because I am inclined to think he had one, though I never really got inside his skin, for as we all know, East is East and West is West. But I noticed

TWO GREAT STALKERS

a pleased twinkle in his eye when my Great Dane chased the bullock men, pretending she was going to devour them, when actually she had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

He thought her a jewel among dogs, a very proper companion for his Sahib. She added dignity to our walks abroad, and dignity, as I have already said, was very important.

On these visits Mahomed Khan would always bring the conversation round to the same subject ; without hurry or insistence, but quite definitely. Rather in a “by-the-way-I’ve-suddenly-remembered” sort of way. “Did I know the District Superintendent of Police ?” “Yes, I knew him,” I would reply, enjoying the joke and leaving him to make the next move. Ah ! that was good. Then I would undoubtedly be able to move his son, possibly the smartest young policeman in the whole Province, from the sweltering hopelessness of Attock to the salubrious potentialities of Hassan Abdul, which was—need I say it ?—within “week-ending” distance (or the village Indian equivalent) of Fatehjang, the old man’s home. I think the old rascal thought this would bolster up his case for final victory in the family lawsuit over half a rood or so of land, the origin of a feud to which the little difference between Montagu and Capulet was but the paltry simulacrum of a quarrel.

Mahomed Khan had every art of the stalker. Patience, rapid decision, and above all the ability to instil benignant calm into his Sahib. He knew those Punjaub oorial inside out, and he was responsible for some of the best bits of stalking I have ever seen.

THE GREATEST OORIAL

His greatest triumph, however, was gained in a moonlight stalk with another rifle, and the story, as I give it here, is mere hearsay.

For three years Mahomed Khan and this Sahib, who shall be called James, had been stalking together in the Salt Hills, and their path had run smoothly. Then a year before my story begins they had come quite by chance on the greatest of all oorial, a hundred yards away, outlined in the setting sun, with his two vast conks of horns curving up almost into his eyes. Mahomed Khan held his breath. That oorial would represent the crowning triumph of his life. It was what St. Paul's was to Wren, or *The Old Wives' Tale* to Arnold Bennett. And no Sahib was a safer shot than this. But they were yet to learn that the greatest of all oorial had far more air round him than any ordinary animal, and James unaccountably, unforgettably, but very unmistakably shattered the ground beneath its belly, while the Greatest of All Oorial clattered away into the sunset with his copious Zenana.

Five times after that they stalked him. Only once did they succeed in getting a shot, and then at a disappearing scut, a shot prompted more by the exasperation of the moment than the strict canons of sporting conduct. Four times they had set about an elaborate approach march. Four times the stage had seemed well set, and then a well-placed sentinel or a treacherous puff of wind had sent the herd off. That was the previous cold weather. They had been out again week-end after week-end all through the winter that followed, and now in January they had at last found their quarry again, having spurned every other head

TWO GREAT STALKERS

that offered. No wonder then that they were a prey to a most lively agitation.

Nor was the stage any better set on this than on former occasions. The herd were feeding on a side spur of the main ridge. Approach from above was impossible, for the sentinel hinds were out some way from the monarch himself, who reposed in dignified calm beneath a bush. There remained the side spur running parallel to the one on which the herd were ; but that again seemed out of the question as there was a strong if somewhat fitful wind blowing thence towards the herd. The only alternative was to take a long detour out into the plain, and ascend the ridge on which the herd had gathered from below, for the scrub and rocks gave a very fair measure of cover. But there again the Greatest of All Oorial had shown the genius which had let the years whiten his venerable beard, by placing a long glissade of shale 250 yards below him, over which no pursuer could pass without letting loose a cascade of stones.

Up on the hillside the whispered counsel of war went on. Mahomed Khan was for a long shot from above. James was for trusting to the mercy of the God of Winds. Each would have neither of the other's plan, so finally they agreed to ascend the ridge from below, a scheme in which neither had much faith. The black specks of the waiting eagles above saw the two minute figures withdraw, pass to the eastern side of the hill, move back, cross over again and descend half a mile behind into the plain. Did they approve ? What was the opinion of those un-speaking umpires of so many stalks ? Had they, too,

TOO LATE!

a particular interest in the Greatest of All Oorial whose haunches had been so often offered, so consistently withheld? Or would they have preferred something more young and succulent? Whatever were their views on these questions in the upper air, they were of no interest to the two sweating dust-covered figures who by now had completed the detour which brought them exactly below the herd, and to the foot of the shale. From then onwards the measure of their progression was Agag's. Step after delicate step they took upwards, pausing after every footfall for a tell-tale slither of rubble. Forty, fifty and a hundred and fifty yards they went, and still the herd remained. Only twenty more yards to go! Surely Fortune could not really mean to smile? Now they were at the farther edge of the shale, with a great bluff of rock above them twenty feet high. Once they were round then they would be within easy shot. James tried to force on himself a steely calm. Mahomed Khan was invoking the aid of whatever Gods there be. Then their hearts stopped, held for a second, and hammered on with the dull persistence of despair. For from above came the sound of a slow deliberate march; a sound such as a herd of oorial moving off in unhurried single file would make. Panting, they rushed round the bluff; they might still get a shot; up a little goat-track and on to the top of the rocks. One by one the herd—there were about twenty of them—were topping a hillock 150 yards away, pausing for a moment on the top and then jumping down out of sight beyond with as neat a kick of the heels as one could wish for. But the

TWO GREAT STALKERS

Greatest of All Oorial was not among them. James and his henchman paused for a moment in their chagrin. Then 400 yards higher up, the monarch suddenly appeared for a moment on the ridge. He glanced back, perhaps at the unknown enemy, perhaps at the attendant herd who had held the Fort while he slipped away with his dignity unruffled, and then he too disappeared. Not lost but gone before.

That evening a counsel of war was held. This, said James, is no common oorial : he is possessed not by one but by many devils. Beelzebub can only be encountered by the wiles of Beelzebub. "By night all things are possible," replied Mahomed Khan. "By day the *Shaitan* cannot be approached. Let us see to it how he moves in the night-time, for he will not now be seen on these hills by day for many weeks to come." So it was arranged. For a long month they searched for the tracks of the Greatest of All Oorial, and moved on the hillside when the moon was up hoping to find some track of him. Then one evening they came to a hollow between two hills which were connected by a narrow coll. Down the top of this coll there ran a tortuous track, and on the track were many footprints and the recent droppings of oorial : and among them were the footprints of an unmistakable giant. Crusoe himself could not have viewed his imprint in the sand with greater excitement.

Mahomed Khan gave a confirmatory grunt, and pointed down to the plains : 300 yards down the hill-side was a chain of water-holes in a nallah, a roaring

IN THE MOONLIGHT

spute in the rains, but now the only water within five miles. There was no need for explanation. Few words passed between them, for they understood both each other and their business well. The oorial used this path to descend to water, and as they had not been seen on the hill by day for a month it might be possible that they were moving by night. That a whole herd could or would hide themselves all day for a month was not probable. Possibly the monarch separated himself from the rest by day, or possibly they had all been skulking in the reserve of a neighbouring Nawab. Whichever it was it was quite clear that the monarch was back.

For five nights they waited behind a clump of bushes which overlooked the point where the track debouched from the coll on to the hillside. It was an ideal position. Once the herd were committed to the track 300 yards away on the other side of the coll they could not deviate to right or left, for it was only a few yards wide and fell away to a steep precipice on either side. Their clump was only ten yards from the track, and if the giant came in the moonlight, he would be as clearly seen as if he had passed at the height of the noon-tide.

When night fell they set forth to keep watch, dozing and waking and dozing again, wrapped up in blankets like any *chokidar*. And nothing came. And again nothing. And again. And again. And then on the fifth night at about half-past ten, there came to their ears the sound of the slipping of a stone, and then silence, and then the sound of approaching hoofs. The two figures in the blankets stiffened and held their

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breath. A safety-catch clicked forward. In the shimmer of the grey ridge a shadowy line approached. One by one, solemn, contemplative, remote. First came a couple of old ewes, then a large male thirty inches at least, a tempting shot at any time. And then strung out at fairly long intervals the rest of the herd. And that was all. Mahomed Khan turned his great brown spaniel's eyes in mute beseeching agony to James. A minute passed and then once more the sound of an animal's approach. They strained out into the moonlight. Something came nearer, and nearer still. Yes—no—yes. It *was* the monster. There could be no doubt as to that. He came to within ten yards of them and they could see every line of his great horns, the thorn-marks on his thick winter coat, the very grey hairs in his massive ruff. His eye was black and expressionless : he was for once devoid of guile or suspicion : he was lost in delightful thought—his wives perhaps, some plot of succulent green herbage, his sovereignty of the herd. James dropped him dead with a bullet through the heart. Peace to his ashes.

James never shot another oorial. His trophy measured thirty-four and a half inches, the longest head that had been brought into 'Pindi for many a long day. To have shot another would have been an anti-climax. And for Mahomed Khan too it was a Nunc dimittis. He would go with other Sahibs it is true. While there was strength in his body to walk, and the winged word of criticism on his tongue, he would remain the doyen of the Salt Hill shikaris.

NUNC DIMITTIS

But when he saw that head resting before James's tent, he realized that he had achieved ambition. He had built his St. Paul's : he had written his "Old Wives' Tale." May he, too, rest in peace !

And with those last words I think I will leave Mahomed Khan, who taught me most of what I know about hill-stalking and everything that I know about oorial, because those are just my feelings towards him.

Of Frank Philipps I write with greater restraint, for the simple reason that he will be able to read what I say about him. Not, I hasten to add, because I fear either the laws of libel and slander, but because the English, lacking courtly Spanish graces, care not about praising a man to his face. Frank is a very typical Canadian guide, and I think it will be generally admitted that he is the best guide in British Columbia to-day. Now, the great thing about my Canadian guide, at any rate any decent one, is that he will go to any trouble to get you your head. "Here you are, you've come all this way and we must make it worth your while." I have already told the story of Frank and my sheep and the trouble he took to get it me, so I need not enlarge on this theme. A Canadian guide will put up with the most intense discomfort and physical exertion on your behalf. I am not going to enlarge on this, because if I haven't made it plain in much cold print in a former chapter I will not make it plain here.

Where Frank or any other Canadian or New Zealand guide will differ from your native shikari, however, is this. The Indian or African, however good he is,

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will give you the answer in either a greater or a less degree than he thinks you want. But a man like Frank will tell you the naked truth at any price. If you shot badly he will be very nice about it, but he will not say you shot well. If you are not fit he will be very nice about it and bring forward every extenuating circumstance, but he will not tell you the mountain-side is unscalable. He will tell you that you are not at present able to scale the mountain.

Then again the difference between Frank and, say, Musia or Mahomed Khan is that whereas the two natives will entirely merge their little foibles in your particular idiosyncrasies, Frank retains his own individuality, and that makes him the character that he is. He never loses his personality in a sea of butter. Frank's little peculiarity—if it is right to call it a peculiarity—is care of his horses. Frank is always thinking and caring for his beasts, and a very good thing, too. If he took less care of his horseflesh, one could never hope to finish a trip without casualties. He spaces out his marches with care and nice consideration for available feeding-grounds, so that when he is really called on to ask them to make a special effort they are in fit condition to respond. Our average march was, perhaps, twelve miles, but one day we had to do thirty-five, mostly all over snow. We did it.

How well I remember those last raw and frozen mornings, a few minutes with chattering teeth round an incipient fire, and then off to round up the ponies, who may have gone off anything up to five miles. What yells of exhortation, what shrieks of profanity.

PLAIN SPEECH

How many mares became dogs in that chill half-light of dawn! Well, one can share those shivering miseries with a man like Frank; with a native one can only share the triumphs. Perhaps share is scarcely the word, for when it comes to camp life Frank and his fellows shoulder the burden, and the visiting sportsmen can only fulfil a few menial duties, the hewing of wood or the drawing of water. One can, of course, sit apart in Olympian calm, but that is not going to help to foster good fellowship, or even a sense of personal decency in oneself.

But the charm of having a man like Frank with one is that he comes out as a companion, whereas Musia or Mahomed Khan come as servants. The rifle is cleaned and put away, a meal is brought to one, and one has nothing left but to turn to Jane Austen or Ethel M. Dell. Whereas with a guide of one's own kith and kin one can sit and talk about the quarry and his habits and the great hunts of the past. Your native is seldom a naturalist. His view is circumscribed by his own immediate surroundings. But Frank would give you an opinion on any subject you like to mention in good plain forcible Anglo-Saxon at any time of the day or night. One learnt from him not only on the hill: one learnt by the camp-fire and on the march. He knew the game of British Columbia inside out, and he thought there was no other place in the world like British Columbia to shoot in.

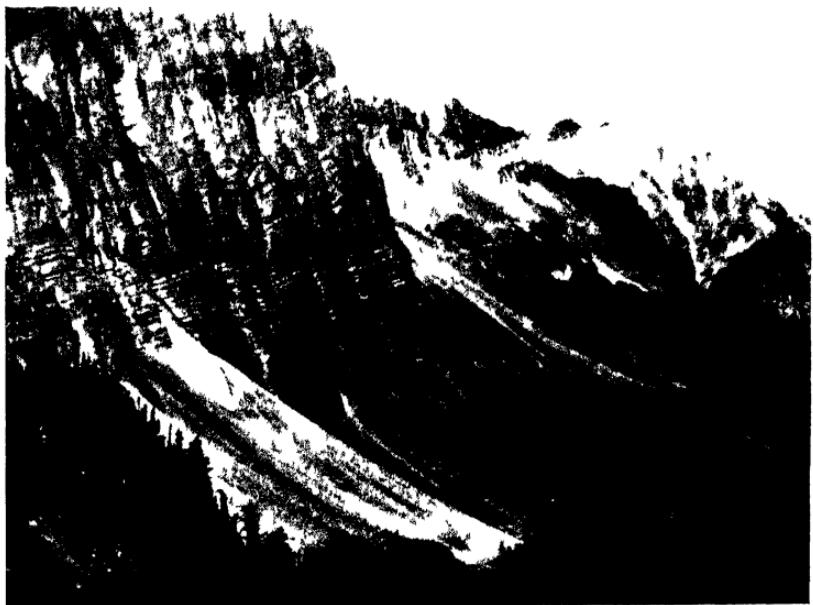
One's good Canadian loves his country and is always on the look out for slighting Britishers. Fortunately most English sportsmen arrive in a state of hyperbolic congratulation. Frank was no excep-

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tion. He would hear nothing of India or Africa. But as the spell of those great mountains and broad valleys where he works weaves its way round one's heart, one could hardly blame him. I cannot say more about Frank. I cannot write of him as I write of Musia or Mahomed Khan as a beloved retriever dog. I give him the restrained praise of the Englishman to his friend.



FRANK PHILIPS



WHIRL THE OLD BILLIES LAIR

CHAPTER XII

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

MY own stale fare is not yet quite finished, but before the curtain falls let me leaven the loaf with a story which my father told me. It is, except for the last chapter, the only subject in the book which has not come authentically beneath my notice. But the story has always pleased me so much that I am glad to have this opportunity to tell it, partly because it is, to my mind, an excellent one, and partly because my father was, when he exerted himself, the Prince of Story-Tellers. Walking together we would often invent and tell each other such stories ; we would criticize, dissect, improve. Big game was a subject very near to his heart, and he loved best those that had some connection with it. His stories were always better than mine, and this was one of his best. I heard him tell it two or three times, and it was practically always the same. I remember my criticism—"A good story, but impossible." "Nevertheless," he replied, "it is founded on absolute fact, and its concluding incident is literally true. Nobody will ever believe it, but, nevertheless, it is." And he mentioned names and places.

It was at a dinner-party at the Duchess of Elephant and Castle's, in Portman Square, that Clegg first met

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Higson, and, after the departure of the ladies from the dining-room, they found themselves stranded next to one another. There was, and is, nothing of the sportsman in either Higson's appearance or manner, and Clegg was considerably astonished when, a discussion on arms of precision having arisen at the other end of the table, he coolly turned round and gave his opinion—a correct one, as Clegg afterwards ascertained—without a moment's hesitation, and with an air of conviction that at once closed the controversy.

Now, this incident filled Clegg with admiration for Higson, and for this reason: From his youth up he had ever felt the strongest predilection for field sports, although circumstances had always prevented his indulging in them, and he had, invariably, courted the society of such sportsmen as fate threw in his path; but business in the City, and the care of an aged relative, whose home he shared, and whose rigid and slightly Calvinistic views of life had by no means fostered in him a taste for such mundane pleasures as shooting and fishing, had almost entirely prevented him from following what might have been his natural bent. Her death, however, a short time before that of which I write had left him in such easy circumstances as to become a sleeping partner in his business, and he had sold his gloomy old house in Mecklenburg Square, where the greater part of his life had been passed, and moved into a more cheerful part of the town. It was no doubt due to an exaggerated estimate of his late aunt's fortune that he found himself a guest at so fashionable an entertain-

THE PERFECT SPORTSMAN

ment as the dinner-party at Elephant and Castle House.

Most people have at some period of their lives felt a sudden and unaccountable attraction towards some person up to that moment a total, or, at least, a comparative, stranger to them, but no expression adequately describes the sympathetic feeling Clegg experienced when he first met Higson. Why this should have been I cannot pretend to say. It was not his appearance, which was short, stout, and middle-aged ; nor his conversation, though he was an undeniably fine talker ; nor his manners, though these, too, were good ; but it was an indescribable feeling of attraction which prompted him later in the evening to seek a formal introduction to his host, which, the night being fine and warm, and the road home to their respective residences lying in the same direction, led to their smoking a quiet cigar together after they had left the Elephant and Castle's hospitable roof. Never did Clegg forget that quiet stroll through the hot, dusty squares and streets ; it is not very far from Portman Square to Pall Mall, where Clegg's chambers were situated, but in the comparatively short space of time it took them to get there, Higson had, as it were, personally conducted Clegg on a sporting tour round the globe. Without ceasing, and with a certain charm of manner peculiarly his own, he roamed from the heathery braes of Scotland to the jungles of Hindustan, and discoursed with equal ease of the rabbit or the rhinoceros, the lapwing or the lynx ; and, delighted with his new acquaintance's conversational powers, Clegg cordially

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

accepted an invitation to breakfast with him on the following morning.

He was not surprised on entering Higson's comfortable chambers next day to find that their appointments were an easy index to his tastes ; a noble stag's head over the fireplace faced a grinning tiger's skull over the sideboard, whilst a large bearskin took the place of a more stereotyped hearthrug ; fine artists' proofs of Thorburn's, and Stuart-Wortley's inimitable sporting scenes covered the walls, and a well-filled bookcase groaned under every variety of work relating to sport and natural history, from the—then—latest issue of the Badminton series up to Cuvier and Jerdon.

It was, therefore, not unnatural that, when an excellently cooked and served breakfast had been discussed and cleared away, he should turn the conversation on to the subject of sport, and the history of the sporting trophies adorning the walls ; but his intense astonishment can perhaps be better imagined than described when he ascertained that not only was his host not the obtainer of the said trophies, but that he was actually, as regards practical knowledge of sporting matters, Clegg's exact counterpart —a man who, though naturally addicted to field sports, had, owing to circumstances, been almost entirely prevented from participating in them.

His astonishment must have been very clearly depicted in his face, though he said nothing (indeed, he was too flabbergasted to do so) as Higson went on to say, with a deprecatory smile, “ The fact is, I have read and studied all works on sport and travel

EXPERTO CREDE

to such an extent that strangers often credit me with a more practical knowledge of such subjects than I really possess."

Now, my readers will doubtless imagine that Higson at once lost caste in Clegg's estimation, but let me hasten to assure them that this was far from being the case. Slight as their acquaintance was, Clegg had already conceived a strong predilection for him, and although he was sorry to find he was not the sportsman he had taken him for, his regret was greatly tempered by the knowledge that his inferiority to him on this score was not so great as he had anticipated, and from this date their acquaintance ripened into intimacy, until, at last, being both idle men of independent means and similar tastes and habits, hardly a day passed without them spending some portion of it together, and I am bound to confess that Clegg found his new friend a very excellent companion. It is impossible to conceive a man who had the *theory* of his subject more at his fingers' ends than Higson; and after having heard him give Mr. Rowland Ward a few friendly hints on the setting up of African antelopes' heads, confute a keeper at the Zoological Gardens as to the habits of the creatures under his charge, and lay down the law on loading cartridges to Messrs. Holland & Holland's foreman, Clegg confessed to the most profound admiration for, as well as astonishment at, his talents.

Weeks passed on, and the London season was drawing to a close, and Higson and Clegg, who had agreed to take an autumn holiday together, were still undecided as to the manner in which to spend

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it. They were both determined that it should in some way partake of a sporting character ; but while Higson was inclined to the idea of taking a small shooting in one of the Home counties, Clegg, who was very fond of fishing, and rather mistrusted his skill with the gun, was for a tour among the Sutherland lochs, when one Sunday morning, after they had lunched together at the Benedict's Club, Higson fairly took Clegg's breath away by proposing that they should undertake a sporting expedition to Scandinavia.

It appeared that the following advertisement ("Sweden, on Norwegian frontier. To Let. Superb shootings at elks, bears, and ptarmigans, with fine angling of trout. Good shooting-house with English beds. Very cheap rent. Apply, Israellsson, Christiania") was the cause of this sudden proposal, and, unknown to Clegg, Higson had put himself into communication with Mr. Israellsson, and received what he considered a very satisfactory reply. The place was in the province of Skraemtland, in the north of Sweden, and had been formerly tenanted by an Englishman who had left the English beds and some rough furniture ; the district was a noted one for elk ; bear were frequently found in the vicinity ; and the trout-fishing and bird-shooting were apparently unrivalled. Nor was the place very inaccessible, being within half a day's journey of a railway station on the line from Trondhjem to Stockholm ; the rent—£200 for the season—did not seem excessive, all these advantages being taken into consideration ; and hunters, dogs and boatmen could

THE PERFECT OUTFIT

be procured in the neighbourhood, and altogether Higson appeared thoroughly bitten with the idea. In vain did Clegg point out their mutual inexperience of shooting matters, their ignorance of the language, their inability to cope with large and (as Clegg reflected, not without an inward qualm) dangerous game, and many other objections ; his friend, whose mind was already thoroughly made up, pooh-poohed them all, and eventually succeeded in overcoming them. The Norwegian agent's offer was closed with, berths were booked on a Trondhjem steamer, and Clegg, who but two short years before had been a steady-going City man, found himself booked for a sporting expedition into what he believed to be a savage and but half-civilized country.

However, there was no help for it, and the intervening time before their departure passed not unpleasantly in preparations for the campaign, though Clegg was not a little astonished at the outlay this demanded, and could not help thinking what his poor aunt's feelings would have been could she have seen the bill for a new double-barrelled gun and a .450 Express rifle from a first-rate London maker, not to mention the cost of tents, camp cooking apparatus, blanket sleeping-bags, fishing-tackle, and a host of other articles, all declared indispensable by Higson and the shop-keepers from whom they were purchased, and the bulk of which, I need hardly add, they found subsequently to be absolutely useless.

I will pass over the voyage across the North Sea and arrival in Trondhjem, where they stayed a few days to lay in stores and engage a " tolk " or inter-

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

preter. The town was crowded with English sportsmen, either returning home from their salmon-fishing, or outward bound for ryper-shooting and elk-hunting ; and a perfect babel of sporting talk arose each night in the smoking-room of the hotel, and oh ! how the voice of Higson dominated it all, now giving a wrinkle on salmon-flies to some angler from the Namsen or Pasvig, or laying down the law on rifles to some veteran reindeer stalker !

A couple of days later they arrived at their headquarters, nor could their untravelled eyes have imagined a more charming spot ; a cluster of red-painted wooden houses standing in an oasis of green meadow in the midst of the pine forests. Scarcely fifty yards from the door of their house a beautiful rushing river, clear as crystal, danced along to lose itself a little farther on in the calmer waters of a lovely hill-encircled lake, and on all sides rolled great forest-covered hills, rising at times into what seemed to be very respectable mountains. The two or three families of natives inhabiting the place were friendly, if slightly inquisitive, folk, and a stout, bare-footed lass was soon found to aid Petersen, their tolk, in the arduous duties of the household ; the house itself, with the aid of the much-vaunted English beds, was fairly comfortable, and, indeed, the novelty and charm of the life induced them to look on everything with rather rose-tinted spectacles. The sporting capabilities of the place were as good as they could reasonably have expected. True, the bags of game were not so large as they might have been, but this was possibly due to their moderate shooting

G R E A T T R O U T

—or rather, “killing”—powers, and also to the vagaries of their only dog, a half-broken setter called Diana, that Petersen had induced them to purchase at Trondhjem, and which, though undoubtedly endued with an excellent “nose,” was also possessed with the notion that it could catch birds on the wing, and invariably “ran in” as soon as it found game, and would occasionally pursue it for a hundred yards or so, joyously barking the while. The elk-hunting season had not yet commenced, nor did the reports of the natives lead them to expect very much sport when it did; but of the trout-fishing I can only speak in terms of unqualified praise. Higson and Clegg early discovered that it was “too late in the season” for fly-fishing, this being a little salve to their inexperience in the higher branches of angling, but they did not find it too late for trailing with a spoon or phantom minnow, and the river, a succession of large, swift pools, being admirably adapted for this fascinating, if somewhat lazy, form of sport, they spent most of their days in being rowed about with two rods out at the stern of their boat; and right royal sport did they enjoy. The lake and river simply swarmed with delightfully unsophisticated trout, great gloriously spotted fellows running up to 4 and 5 lb. in weight, and, as far as Clegg was concerned, he would have been very well content to spend the rest of his stay in Scandinavia in this peaceful pursuit; and, despite a novice’s keenness where big game is concerned, he very reluctantly relinquished the rod for the rifle when the elk-hunting season commenced, only to resume it with increased eager-

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

ness in the course of a few days. He soon discovered, as other elderly men have done before him, that elk-hunting is a sport only adapted to the young, vigorous, and ardent. He had imagined it would be something like Scotch deer-stalking, as depicted in the prints in the shop windows in Bond Street, and, oh! how bitterly was he disappointed ; and he soon learned to loathe the long, miserable tramps over immense morasses, or up and down (chiefly up) steep forest-covered mountains, in company with an odoriferous native hunter whose language he could not understand, and whose powers of progression enormously exceeded mine. The only trace of elk they ever found was their year-old tracks ; and, in fine, it was with unfeigned relief that Clegg returned to his comfortable boat, with two rods over the stern, and lunch and a cigar-case stowed under a thwart. He fell, however, enormously in the estimation of Higson, who, a just man and one tenacious of his purpose, stuck to the elk-hunting in the gamest manner possible, though at times even he found it necessary to take a holiday and join his friend in a day's trout-fishing or typer-shooting.

Time passed pleasantly on, until the shortening of the days and the coolness of the nights warned them that they must shortly be turning their steps homeward ; but Higson, tortured by the spoor of a visionary bull elk, determined to stay till the bitter end of the season, which then ceased in Skraemtland on the 15th of October ; and Clegg, who was well content with his less ambitious sport, agreed to remain with him.

THE TRACK OF THE BEAR

One fine day in the beginning of October it happened that Higson and Clegg were left entirely alone, with the exception of a lad named Eric, who used to act as gillie, every other able-bodied person about the place having gone off for the day to fetch down some hay from a distant *soeter*. Even Ole, their stalker (who was beginning to get a little tired of the constant lectures on woodcraft he was continually receiving from Higson, who had picked up a smattering of Swedish), had asked for and received a grudging permission to accompany the others, and consequently they had spent a quiet morning in wiping off arrears of correspondence, and it was not until after lunch that they started off, accompanied by Eric, to fish a pool some two miles distant from the house. Now, it so happened that to reach their destination they had to cross a road which led straight through their forest, and which they had facetiously named Piccadilly. When I speak of a road, however, the indulgent reader must not imagine an ordinary macadamized highway, but a sandy track of irregular width, which, despite the uninhabited nature of the country, was, to judge by the ruts and footprints, largely used by both foot-people and owners of *stolkjoerre* (country carts)—why, it is difficult to make out, as the nearest town was at least fifty miles distant. On the day in question, Higson and Clegg, strolling along in front, had already crossed Piccadilly, when a sudden exclamation from Eric, who was following in their wake, brought them up standing. The lad, who was forest-bred, had cast down the bundle of rods he was carrying, and, on hands and

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

knees, was frantically engaged in investigating a track on the sandy surface of the road. They hurried back, and though the spoor which Eric was examining conveyed nothing to Clegg—it looked remarkably like the imprint of a large, flat human foot—Higson recognized it in a moment. “A bear, by Jove!” he cried, and Eric, looking up and catching the name, nodded his head vehemently, and whispered excitedly, “Ja, stor Björn og ganske frisk spor,” and pointed to some further unmistakable evidence that it was only recently that Ursa Major had passed that way.

Eric understood a little English, and they had picked up a few words of Swedish, and a hurried consultation at once took place, the former insisting that they should return home as quickly as possible for their rifles and Passop, the elk-hound, who enjoyed a great reputation as a “bear dog,” and follow up the spoor, while Higson and Clegg, not without frequent glances over their shoulders, counselled waiting till the morrow, when they could organize a proper hunt, with the aid of Ole and the other inhabitants of the district; but Eric scouted this suggestion with disdain, pointing out that by the next day the bear might be miles away, or shot by someone else—the latter event would not have caused Clegg, at any rate, any very serious regret—and eyeing them with such incredulous surprise as caused them for very shame to agree with outward cordiality, but inward—well, misgivings, to his proposal.

Eric even suggested that he should run back to the house alone for the rifles, while they awaited his return; but Higson and Clegg, both struck with

THE STRAINING DOG

the same idea that the bear might take it into his head to retrace his footsteps, unanimously agreed that such a burden was too much for a lad of Eric's age, and decided to return with him. Then ensued a silent, breathless race back to the house, a hasty searching for rifles and cartridges—Clegg gave an involuntary shudder when he saw Higson buckle on an enormous hunting-knife or dagger, purchased in Bond Street—and an equally hurried return to the road, with the elk-hound straining in its leash. How devoutly Clegg prayed that it would ignore the bear spoor, and with what indescribable anguish of mind did he see it, on reaching the spot, pause, snuff the tainted earth, and then bound forward with bristling back and flaming eye, nearly dragging Eric on to his nose. There was no help for it: retreat with honour was impossible now, and, cocking their rifles, they proceeded to follow at a respectful distance, so as not to interfere with Passop's scenting powers—not that there seemed much cause for alarm on that score.

Despite the numerous footprints of man and beast with which the road was covered, the dog never hesitated a moment, but panting and straining in its leash dragged Eric forward at a pace that kept them at a smart jog-trot, until, when they had followed the spoor for nearly half a mile along the road, Passop became so outrageous as to nearly overpower Eric, who, with difficulty pulling him up, beckoned to them to approach, and, in a husky whisper, pointed out that the bear was evidently close at hand, and that they had better go on alone, while he stayed

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

back with the hound, which might otherwise alarm their quarry. About fifty yards ahead the road took an almost rectangular turn round a huge rock or cliff, and it was behind this that Eric expected the bear would be found feeding on a patch of wild raspberries that grew there. Clegg glanced at Higson, and noticed, with a sort of desperate satisfaction, that, despite the heat of the day, his face was as white as a sheet, though it glistened with perspiration, and that he had to moisten his lips twice or thrice ere he could speak.

Noble fellow ! In a voice trembling with what we will presume was excitement, he offered to let Clegg go in front and have first shot, while he would back him up from behind ! Selfishness has never been one of Clegg's failings, and quite overpowered by this generosity, he absolutely refused to take advantage of it. "No, my friend," he murmured, huskily, "it is to you, and you alone, that we are indebted for this moment, and I will not be the one to dash the cup from your lips at the very moment of fruition." Higson, however, responded in equally chivalrous terms, and had it not been for the presence of that cursed Eric—who, unable to appreciate the finer feelings of more educated men, was sorely tempted to attribute this indecision to other and less creditable motives—their mutual delicacy would have almost compelled them to retrace their footsteps and relinquish bear-hunting until a more auspicious occasion. At last Higson suggested they should "toss up," and although Clegg cried "tails," and could have sworn it was the effigy of His Christian Majesty,

PLACE OF HONOUR

King Oscar, that fell uppermost in his friend's palm, he hastily pocketed the coin, and declared that Clegg had won, and was thus entitled to the first shot. Clegg's mind, however, was now fully made up, and he felt that this was no longer a moment for dissembling. "James Higson," he said, in as firm a voice as he could muster, "my life is as precious to me as yours is to you, and if the wild beast on the other side of that rock has to be tackled we will do it together like men, or I will go straight home and leave you to do the job yourself." For a moment Higson hesitated, and Clegg fondly hoped he was going to have the common sense to agree to a retreat; but, pulling himself together, he moistened his lips, and hoarsely agreed that they should advance side by side.

We can visualize the white sandy track, the dark pines, the great rock standing out like a buttress across our path, the horrible silence broken only by the distant roar of the river and the beating of their hearts, and Higson and Clegg with rifles cocked and at "the ready," crouching along as though shod with lead. Eric was kneeling in the road muffling the dog's head in his coat, and his face was almost as white as Higson's. Once a brown jay moved suddenly in a tree above their heads and caused them to jump a couple of yards backward with astonishing alacrity, and Clegg noticed how Higson had manœuvred himself into the best place for retreat in the event of their being attacked.

At last, slowly as their unwilling feet carried them forward, the dreadful moment came when the next

AN UNBEARABLE RECOLLECTION

step would take them round the fatal rock. They paused, hesitated, looked back to see if the road were clear, and then, commanding themselves to Providence, stepped gingerly round the corner! This is what they saw.

A large, shabby, rusty-coated bear, muzzled, collared, and chained, was lying on the roadside in the full glare of the afternoon sun, and reclining at full length, with his head on the bear's flank, was a swarthy black-bearded man, who, after a somewhat scared glance at their rifles, recognized them as English, and, rising to his feet, made them a low bow, and, with a grin that showed all his white teeth, said: "Buon giorno, Signori. Vould you laike to zee my bear dance?"

CHAPTER XIII

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

TO all, to each there are moments in life which one would prefer not to recall, moments which one can only think of with a feeling of acute discomfort, moments which leave a Calais written on our hearts, as on poor Mary Tudor's. Big-game shooting has these moments no less than the rest of life, and having discussed luck that was good and luck that was bad, we may, perhaps, lift the veil which covers some of the evil that men do. There is no big-game shot living who has not at one time or another broken the law in some degree. There is something of the poacher in every Englishman; it is a legacy inherited from Shakespeare at Charlecote. And when the poaching in question is done at the expense of Government, consciences seem to be peculiarly elastic. No story is told in the Highlands with greater gusto than that of "John McNab" who is still happily with us, one of the few real characters left in these islands to-day. John McNab had a bet with a friend that he could enter his property, shoot a stag, remove it and depart without detection. He waited his time till the first excitement had died down, slipped over the march just after dawn and slew his stag. Just as he was leaving the property a keeper or stalker spotted him, but he was unable

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

to catch him. The story has been told by John Buchan, but not the aftermath, which was the arrival, per parcel post, of the less savoury products of the gralloch on his friend's breakfast table next morning.

Moreover, few people have any strong feeling against the poacher who goes out poaching for a bit of sport, that is if he restricts himself to rabbits and hares and a not more than occasional pheasant. It is the poacher for profit, the man that shoots to sell, and not for a bit extra "for t'owd woman" that one feels so strongly against. It is, indeed, a comment on changing social customs that the professional poacher of to-day arrives on a motor-bicycle, and that the dreadful affrays that took place before the War, even in my memory, are apparently a thing of the past.

For myself I can claim a fairly clean bill of fare as regards poaching. I have only once entered a block for which I was not licensed, and then I played Box & Cox with a suspicious game guard and my conscience till, finally, I removed myself without shooting anything. I once entered my block a fortnight before I should have, but that did nobody any harm, and once or twice I have shot a head over the number on my licence. Still it was a very good head. I also have a cow bison on the debit side of my account, and in earlier days, apart from an incident which I am now going to relate, one or two small heads since buried. But looking back at everything I think I can say with true Britannic smugness that my record bears inspection.

There is, however, an incident which I think I

THE SALT HILLS

may as well record here, and of which, reprehensible though it is, I cannot actually say I am bitterly ashamed. As I said in a previous chapter, these things are horrible if somebody else does them (especially if the offender is a few years younger or less experienced than one is oneself) but a very good story with the second bottle of the Chateau Quelquechose at the Shikar Club dinner, when it refers to something one has done oneself. This particular occasion was ten years ago or more in India, in the Salt Hills. Not in the Salt Hills proper where there are regular blocks, but in the range near Jhelum where anybody who is in the neighbourhood can go out and try for an oorial. I believe that to-day these oorial, owing to the lax administration of the Arms Act, have been practically exterminated by the villagers, though the recent activities of the Punjab Government as regards game preservation may have done some good. I hope so indeed, for I have a very warm feeling for the old oorial, in whose pursuit I have had so many happy hours.

There were three of us out there together to shoot, and I was the youngest of the three. One of them we will call the Duke, who, because of his aristocratic and aloof demeanour had long since earned him this nickname. Let the other be known as Archie, though this facetious abbreviation fits his urbane and mocking temperament as ill as the more formidable Archibald, both most splendid companions. I trust that my casting the thin ray of publicity on to this our deed of darkness will not do anything to lessen that friendship. Since then the Duke has

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

gone on from strength to strength as a shikari, while Archie, having among other feats assisted at bagging, with another rifle, five tigers in three days in the Central Provinces, has now as his only target the bulls and bears of high finance.

We were camping in rather small eighty-pound tents in the neighbourhood of Sohawa. It was, I remember, exceedingly cold, for though the Punjab winter can produce in one the most extraordinary sense of personal well-being it can demand tribute of the uttermost posteen. We decided that night, forming a close circle round a petrol tin of charcoal, that we would split on the morrow into two parties, Archie and I going to the east of the road, the Duke to the west. We had two rival guides, each certain that they knew of serried masses of oorial, and each hinting that the other fellow was an impostor, the son of an impostor. We spurred them on with suggestions of great reward, and the prospect of the smile of the Lieutenant-Governor lighting upon them, for the urbane Archie rarely travelled without letting it be known through the medium of his servants that he was the nearest and dearest of the Local Great. I remember in this connection how a whole village turned out somewhere between Saharanpur and Meerut in the middle of the night to push his car out of a river bed under the mistaken impression that he was the Commissioner of the District! And so, well fortified by that mixture of sloe gin and whisky with which the Briton on the north-west frontier keeps out the cold, we retired to bed.

The next morning we started at dawn, but not

HIMALAYAN DAWN

before we had laid a bet on both the quantity and the quality of our respective bags. Silently in single file, with that unpleasant feeling of sleepiness and surfeit which comes of eating a large and very early breakfast simply because one feels one ought, out we went into the gathering dawn, somnolent, uncertain. After twenty minutes our ways separated. The Duke made off with his two retainers into the gloom, and Archie and I held on our course to the northward. There was hardly, even in us, the necessary bonhomie to fling off the usual gambits. The Duke, given at times to deep and impressive silences, said not a word, and a mild facetiousness on the part of Archie was all we could muster. But soon the sun began to rise and the distant snow-top of the Kaj-i-Naj gilded to opalescent splendour. And not till one has seen sunrise in the Himalayas does one know "rosy-fingered dawn, child of the mists."

The first rays began to warm us, and we entered the hills, stalking elaborately, the one not wishing to let the other think that he would cede him a jot in jungle-craft. Were I to crawl cautiously round a boulder to spy, Archie would hiss, "Look *out*, man ; that's a likely place." While, as he put away his glasses, I would mutter, "What's that," and pretend I had picked up something he had missed. However, our methods gradually became normal and finally dilatory, as the sun got hotter and the quarry became no more apparent. I, if memory serves me right, had sat on a cactus bush, while something even of Archie's urbanity was ruffled by a light pair of cow-skin inners which he wore with his chapalis. He

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

had shot in Cashmere, and so naturally wanted to assert his superiority over my brogues. And I, need I say it, was not without jealousy. Soon spying had given place to very perfunctory glances, and after about five hours of it to no glances at all. We wandered along the broken ridges and down over the spare grass of the nallahs. There wasn't the sign of an oorial : there was not even a hare. Once I recall a covey of chakor went whirring away from our feet and we both grasped our pieces as though a rhinoceros was about to charge out upon us. By eleven o'clock we both knew it was hopeless, at any rate till the sun had begun to set, but neither of us would make the first suggestion that it might be as well to follow the oorial and take our midday siesta. Finally Archie, whose common sense could generally be guaranteed to assert itself quicker than anybody else's, called a halt.

We seated ourselves beneath the shadiest rock we could find. It was a point of vantage and it commanded extensive views over the neighbouring terrain, as the house agents say. On the other side—the sunny side—sat our two retainers. They were pensive. The five rupees which had been paid on the head of that oorial did not look like coming their way. They had in their subdued conversation behind us already divided it and re-divided it into unlimited ghi. Now it looked as if they would go ghi-less to bed. It seemed very sad—life was hard. Archie and I ate our sandwiches and drank the warming water from our water bottles. We agreed that from where we were we would get a splendid view of any oorial who might think of moving ; he would

A DISGRACEFUL EPISODE

look to the right, I to the left . . . right . . . left . . . right. We slept.

At about half-past two, two slumbering young men, and two somnolent Punjaubis adorning the four corners of that rock like Caryatides, suddenly galvanized into life, for from an eminence on the other side of the valley there rang out a burst of rapid fire. I was slow coming to my senses, but Archie, who had grasped the situation with lightning rapidity, was running forward, rifle in hand. "It's that bloody Duke," he shouted. I, too, seized my rifle and joined him on a commanding position where I could overlook the nallah leading up to the mountain, which the Duke had turned into his firing-point. Archie was a little higher up where he could see round a bend which was hidden to me. Suddenly he flopped down on his tummy and opened fire. One, two, three times he shot. That was too much for me. Here was Archie with his usual devilish cunning getting all the shooting—I remembered that duck shoot when he had wangled the only dry stand: I remembered the occasions when he had filched from me the lady of my choice. Sporting decencies to hell, I thought, and I rushed to his side. Charging down the nallah perhaps 200 yards away was a herd of five oorial, and in the bed of the nallah was a little grey body. Poor beasts. Beaten by Archie? Never! Regardless of age or sex, regardless of the trophy, regardless of all the decencies which elders and betters had so laboriously drilled into me, I, too, opened fire. Another little figure fell. The rest galloped on. It was the most disgraceful exhibition at which

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I have ever assisted. I can only plead that I was very young. But there can be no excuse. Public confession is the fashion to-day in the highest religious circles, and I have made mine here. I only hope that my public will give me absolution, but I doubt it.

Slowly we descended the hill. We came to the first oorial ; a small male, perhaps twenty inches, certainly not a shootable head. With lingering but uncertain hope we approached the second one. It had not even horns. Archie rolled it over on its back. We had spared neither age nor sex. I think we both felt ashamed. While we were surveying what we had done we were hailed by a shout from a neighbouring hill-top. It was the Duke. There was no more time for moralizing ; it was the moment for action.

Rarely, if ever, has the old platitude of two minds with but a single thought been more aptly illustrated. Without a word we both began to kick down an overhanging ledge of earth onto the prostrate body. In ten minutes a decent sepulture had been achieved, and hardly had the last pathetic little hoof been covered ere the Duke hailed us from round the corner. We assumed an air of bland innocence. "What have you got ?" he shouted. I thought I detected in his voice a note of enquiry, of anxiety. "One," said Archie firmly. "What's it like," cried the Duke. "Not very big," said Archie. There was a pause—the pregnant pause of one initiating a Dutch auction. "Bigger than this ?" asked the Duke, a little uneasily. He turned round and pointed. Behind him followed his two retainers, carrying an oorial. And its horns, too, were certainly not more than twenty inches.

A QUESTION OF TASTE

We felt much relieved. However blackened our faces were to be they would not be blackened in the face of the Duke. "Let's see yours," he said, and I noticed that his relief seemed no less acute as he cast his eye upon our diminutive corpse. "You did a lot of shooting," he said, looking round for further slain. "Yes," said Archie, with finality, "we did."

Many a good laugh did Archie and I have over that buried ewe in the Salt Hills in the years to come, though truth to tell we should have wept like the Jews by the waters of Babylon. But we both kept our guilty secret, and it was not till many years after, till the halo of romantic memory was beginning to form round our salad days, that we revealed our secret. It was left to the urbane Archie to defend our position. The oorial were duly taken back to civilization and eaten by us and our friends. It would not be too much to say that there were not lacking critics of this slaughter of the innocents. As he gazed about the festive board while the khitmurgars handed that extremely savoury mutton and the currant jelly he remarked sweetly, "Those that don't like it needn't eat it!"

Then there is another deed of darkness that I always like to think of, though I must confess that I do not consider this particular deed unduly dark. Peter Campbell—let us call him—was stationed in West Africa and was a high-spirited and adventurous young man. One night towards the end of his tour of service with the West African Frontier Force the conversation began to turn on the subject of the paucity of shooting in Western as opposed to Eastern

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

Africa, and of the immeasurable distance, sporting as well as geographic, which separated them. Argument ensued, and our Peter was never the man to turn the cold shoulder to controversy. Higher and higher ran the dispute till the thatched roof of the mess seemed likely to rise with the accompanying baptism of snakes and the lesser lepidopteræ that that process seemed likely to engender. Before the fried eggs and black beer had arrived Peter had made a bet that he would travel on foot to Uganda and shoot a lion, a rhino, an elephant and a buffalo within the last six months of his tour.

Of the preparations made I have not time to write here. Both were extensive. But some weeks after George Harperley Wilkinson was sitting outside the boma of a small K.A.R. outpost in Western Uganda. George was of the best type that goes to the K.A.R. Strong, fond of the open air, a he-man, and far from unintelligent, his spirit had rebelled against the continued excitements of commanding at Catterick, Yorks, a platoon which existed only on paper. The prospects of commanding a real live one in India was more alluring, but he feared that he might not be quite up to the social requirements of "burra-mems," of whose regeneration of Burblepore society he had heard the officers of the Indian battalion of his regiment speak, more especially in connection with that magnificent open-air festivity, the Burblepore week. So he came out to Africa and found his spiritual home. He shot his quota of elephants, and, indeed, more than his quota. He shot roan and rhino, oryx and oribi. He shot a very fine kudu of over fifty

“DOCTOR LIVINGSTONE . . .”

inches, a noteworthy achievement in Uganda. He liked the Africans and the Africans liked him. He knew when to make a fuss, like so many of us. And he knew, as so few of us do, when to leave alone.

He had just put down his copy of a four weeks' old *Field*, sent him by an indulgent father, whose chief complaint in life was that the title of that periodical now read the *Country*, as opposed to the *Country Gentleman's Newspaper*, when there arrived one, a bearer of intelligence, who reported that a *bwana* was arriving from out of the nebulous West. The news was as sensational as a dweller at Rye suggesting that a strong swimmer was expected hourly from Ostend. George derided, doubted and, finally, went out to inspect. Coming in past the big water-holes which kept the whole population of the village alive during the dry season was Peter Campbell, a party of eleven porters and a Nigerian orderly. They were “all in.” But Peter was not the man to call loudly for whisky, and sink to the ground with a cry of “Thank God,” on seeing what to him must have meant a great deal. He knew his cue. There was only one possible remark to make under these circumstances, and that was “Doctor Livingstone, I presume?” He made it, and was welcomed by George as a kindred spirit.

Ten days' rest and recuperation worked wonders in Peter, who had been pretty nearly finished, and small wonder when one thinks of what he had achieved. He even began referring to his trek as a major expedition, and to talk about collating scientific data, though what scientific data he had collected on

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the way except the parasites on his servants George could not make out. One thing, however, was clear. Peter had carried out the most difficult part of his contract, and it now remained for them to find him the "big four" of dangerous game. Buffalo and elephant would be easy. Rhino and lion more difficult. The auguries, however, proved good. A week after Peter arrived one of George's scouts came back with tidings of Mr. Faru. George kept a number of semi-paid retainers whose province it was to bring news of produce for his bow and spear. Peter with a prospect of much gold and, what was to him a far more potent allure, the chance of showing that he wasn't quite the idiot they took him for, sprang from his bed regardless of a badly swollen foot. They hurried out.

Two miles, four miles, six miles they went down the narrow track that lead into the foothills in the West. "He's not taking us back to Kano, I hope," said Peter; but George answered him not, for there was their guide bending down over the most unmistakable rhino track. It led into a clump of bushes, and somewhere beyond they could hear the old gentleman at work. Suddenly he paused. "He's got our wind," hissed George. Peter pushed forward his safety-catch with every appearance of nonchalance. There was a noise in the bushes as of an approaching express train. The bushes parted, and Mr. Faru came charging down the path. He had not seen them, but he had got their wind. He did not know what was there, but he knew well enough that it was something whose nasty smell had spoilt his evening

A WOUNDED BUFF

stroll, and what with anger and inquisitiveness he offered an easy shot, and Peter did not fail. His neck shot could not have been better placed by Karamoja Bell, who had, incidentally, only just left Uganda. The first scene of the second act had reached its curtain entirely according to plan.

The next item proved more exciting. Nobody minds a buffalo much when he is unwounded. A wounded buffalo is considered by many to be one of the most unpleasant things on the face of the earth. George was busy attending to that correspondence which keeps the British officer so busily engaged in peace time, accounting for chevrons of rank, changes of religion, and unexpired portions of yesterday's—or is it to-day's?—rations. Peter arrived, a little ruffled, but still as outwardly unconcerned as ever. “I've come to borrow your rifle,” he said. “I want a second one for Abdullah. I've wounded a buffalo.” You will observe he did not say I want you to come and help me, because Peter never asked aid of any man. George girt up his loins and went. Three miles out they came to an unmistakable blood-track, where Abdullah was waiting, quite a subdued Abdullah. “He was just under that tree—the big one, eighty yards away down there, and I gave him it behind the shoulder. He was only ten yards away from the high grass and he was in it before I could reload.”—“Hell. You should have had the double-barrel. Magazines are very little use on this game.”—“I was a bloody fool really to take the shot with the high grass so close, but time's getting on and I wanted him.”—“Does

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the grass go back far?"—"To Sierra Leone I should think. Perhaps to the Sargasso Sea."—"Hell!"

They went slowly round to the right. There seemed a ray of hope there, because on one side the grass thinned away very much. It was the difference in tracking with it above their heads and with it up to their waists. Abdullah made a cautious cast forward. Then he stopped. He was going to be ground scout no longer. He had found the track. Those of us who have danced Sir Roger de Coverley in our youth—and which of us has not?—will remember the motion when one passes round one's opposite number back to back. Presumptuous small boys of rowdy habits have been known to push at the young maiden opposite them with their behinds as they sidle round. It was just this gesture that George and Peter began to make. When the one started slowly off down the blood trail, the other would come sidling round in front of him. As soon as he had got started, back would come the other. Finally Peter turned round. "Look here, George, what's the object of this bloody fandango?"—"Well, I want to find the blasted animal."—"This is my funeral."—"That's just what I want to prevent."—"But why prepare for your own?"—"I'm not."—"Anyhow, I know you think I'm incompetent and unfit to follow a wounded buff, but I'd much rather be allowed to try: and if two of us are going on in this damned fool way—oh! but you must—oh! but I couldn't, like women leaving the dining-room—we'll both be bloody well killed."—"Very well. Have it your own way. I'll be straight behind."

HEART OR BRAIN

They went on. An hour passed, and another half-hour after it, and as is inevitable their vigilance began to relax. "I doubt I've lost him," said Peter bitterly. George answered nothing. It was at this juncture that Abdullah gave a hiccough, half of fear, half of delight. There, about fifty yards on, was the buffalo, his high back just visible above the grass, swaying slightly, broadside on to them. Peter threw up his rifle and fired. The buffalo never moved. "Give him the second barrel," said George, in a voice of steely calm. He fired again. The buffalo crumpled up. The bet was a day's march nearer home.

The elephant was equally quickly obtained, and a very good elephant he was, too. They came upon him one evening just before sundown, after they had followed a raiding herd for several miles. He was standing alone, an alert, obviously suspicious sentinel to a dozen notoriously wary brethren. George halted Peter. "He's getting our wind," he said, "or he will in a moment. It's no good going on. Rest your rifle, and take a careful shot from here."—"Heart or brain?" asked Peter.—"Heart, of course, at this range. Look, he's swinging his trunk. Hurry up." Peter shot. The elephant turned on his heel and made off, and the rest of the herd stampeded away with a crash of thundering hoofs. "Good God, I can't have missed him?"—"No, you haven't. I heard the bullet strike. He's probably gone on." They found a copious blood-track, and after a short consultation they advanced cautiously down it. They had gone a bare 100 yards when Abdullah gave a cry of triumph. There he was, dead to the heart

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

shot, 150 yards from where he had been shot. He was a fine elephant, nearly seventy pounds, and it began to look as if shooting might be as profitable as betting.

Then things began to go wrong. Neither by hook nor by crook was it possible to bag a lion. They roamed from point to point, from camp to camp, but the king of beasts remained obstinately hid. Sometimes they found a stale spoor, sometimes the remains of a water-buck which had been dead for two days, and one day walking unarmed out of camp in the evening to take some photographs, they came upon a perfectly good lioness at about fifty yards. They ate, drank and dreamed lion, morning, noon and night. But none was forthcoming, and finally George and Peter decided to part, so that the latter might try his luck down in the South. And there it all happened. It might have been a play by Ian Hay.

On arriving at the hotel in N'Jinga Peter found such preparations afoot as had never been known before, not even when the King came as Prince of Wales. Tents, lorries, ice-chests, expensive motor-cars, and half a hundred perspiring Africans in the compound, and within, wine, women and song. It was the Michael Angelo Moving Picture Company, of Hollywood, starting out on the final reel of their famous film, "Man meets Beasts," ("Three years to make, half a million Africans, seven aeroplanes and the wild beasts of the world, with Daisy Delane"). The intrepid Daisy was due to make her appearance, complete with rifle gaiters and permanent wave. For this purpose the party had been busily feeding the

THE CINEMA SHIKARI

local lions for about three weeks, and had reduced them to a state of beatific calm. If one has had to sleuth on one's belly by night for seven days in the week after a dinner that removed itself at all possible speed just as one was about to open one's napkin, one takes very kindly to obliging persons who leave a ready killed zebra in convenient places. The stage was set for the great film, though frankly Cyrus J. Walker, the director, was a little nervous of the principal actors. "I can deal with dames," he said, "and I guess our dames are as uncertain as any goddam lion. But I don't know how they do their stuff." It was in this frame of mind that Peter found him.

Now that worthy was both quick-witted and blessed with the gift of tongues. That evening he was a positive Pentecost. He talked at length (but modestly withal) of the great trek he had made across Africa in search of big game: man meeting beasts, in a word. He mentioned a major expedition and dropped a casual reference to collating scientific data. He showed them "some of my specimens—the rest are coming on later." They consisted of a rhino and buffalo head, and a hearty pair of elephant tusks. He talked of lions with a free and easy familiarity. "There is no real danger," he said, "but, of course, you must have somebody there who is quite sure of himself. A lion may look safe enough, but just that little growl, that twist of the tail, will tell the expert that he is about to charge." "You don't say that?" said Cyrus P. It was not, therefore, very long before Peter was enlisted as a member of the expedition.

Three days later the greatest film of the century

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

was almost complete. The largest maned lion that had ever been seen was finishing his zebra. He had already been photographed in a family group and with other lesser leonine lights. The intrepid Daisy had advanced towards him fortified with a "Baby's Prayer," the latest Hollywood concoction of gin and false courage. The lion had looked up, thrown back his head and growled. Peter, standing behind with the rifle, had wondered whether he had not been a little closer to the truth than he had first imagined. Then the lion returned to his meal while ecstatic cameramen turned their machines in a frenzied staccato. The film was almost complete. The lion, beginning to feel replete, waved his tail twice. "Look out," cried Peter, in vibrant tones, "look out, he's coming." The cameras stopped, Cyrus P. Walker dropped the megaphone, Daisy stepped into the lorry. Then Peter fired. The lion dropped dead, shot through the heart at fifty yards. It was murder most foul, but Peter had won his bet.

He pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket and wiped his brow. Hollywood crowded round. "Was he sure going to charge," they asked excitedly. "Indeed he was," said Peter. "Another ten seconds and it would have been too late." And that is why a magnificent maned lion hangs in Daisy's Hollywood home, and why she tells her friends and rivals of the magnificent young Englishman ("not tall, not good looking, but fascinating") who had saved her life on the plains of Africa. And that is how Peter won his bet, and that is why I am telling a story of which I hope that good friend of mine—who

EXALTED PREPARATIONS

after all is a literary bloke himself—will forgive the embroideries.

My last little story is an Indian one. The deed is a very dark one, and one not altogether uncommon, though there are quite a number of variations on this particular theme. Rajahpore was one of the smaller native states of India, but its ruler was justly respected as a wise and humane man. He also had some of the best tiger shooting in Central India. Naturally, therefore, whenever he laid out a new drain, or founded a hospital, persons more or less exalted in the Exalted Order came, light blue ribbon complete, to Rajahpore to open it. And more often than not for a few days' shooting as well. And never were they allowed to go away empty. On the particular occasion of which I write a more than usually exalted personage was expected, and the preparations were of a much more extensive scale than usual. The jungles had been kept quiet for weeks. Foresters were here, there and everywhere trying to pick up khubber. Whenever a tiger was located kills were put out to encourage him to remain, and gradually many of these tigers were eased in to a particular tract of jungle, the beating of which had been reduced to a fine art. By the time the great day came the Maharajah and the head of his forest department (a kinsman—they understood each other perfectly) reckoned on there being nearly a dozen tigers in the vicinity. "They're all there?" he asked.—"All there, Sir."—"And you've taken the usual precautions?"—"I've doubled them."—"And again to-night."—"Again to-night, but not too much." His Highness

DEEDS OF DARKNESS

gave him a sly glance and sent for the Captain of the Bodyguard to talk over ceremonial arrangements.

Three days later the official junketings were over. The Maharajah and his exalted guest were riding out to the jungle in a Rolls-Royce car. On reaching the jungle they were taken to a specially constructed machan. They climbed to it up a ladder with a red drugget wrapped round it and a thick silken cord for a handrail. Inside were two basket chairs with cushions, a large lunch-basket, champagne, cigars. The hospitality of Rajahpore was famous. Strangely enough the Exalted Person didn't seem to care for these arrangements. "I know it's meant to be a compliment," he whispered to the A.D.C., "though I can't stick it. But I must grin and bear it." He placed himself in front of the machan. The Maharajah stood behind. He held his double-barrelled rifle. Two more were in waiting with a loader each. His host ordered the beat to begin—by telephone.

Immediately tumult was let loose, and within five minutes the Maharajah pointed. A tiger was advancing into the clearing, but with slow, halting and uncertain steps. "Is he wounded?" whispered the Exalted One, who knew more about tigers than he was being given credit for. "No, sir. Shoot." He shot, the tiger staggered forward and collapsed under a tree. "Well done! Beautiful shot—beautiful," whispered the Maharajah. "I am expecting several more." And several more there were. And all of them seemed to be equally halting and uncertain—evidently out of their wits at the sudden tumult which had roused them in the noonday. Two more

DRUGGING THE TIGER

tigers did the Exalted One shoot, and each time his host was profuse in his congratulations. Never had there been such marksmanship: this would be a day to be remembered in the history of tiger shooting. Then a fourth tiger came into the clearing, or rather staggered in. And then the brow of the Exalted One, which his A.D.C. had noticed was growing ominously black, became thunderous. For he knew that there was something wrong. No ordinary tiger rolled and pitched like a ship at sea. He took a careful aim at an anthill on the far side of the clearing twenty yards above the tiger's back and a hundred and fifty yards beyond the spot on which the eyes of everybody else in the machan were fixed. He saw the dust spurt. "Got him," cried his host. "What a beautiful shot. That makes four in five minutes; a record for these jungles. Probably a world record." And as he spoke the tiger staggered on across the clearing and collapsed at the foot of a tree—apparently dead.

The Exalted One behaved perfectly. He said he'd shot enough tigers for one day. He really didn't care about more. He would not be talked round. Very firmly he left the machan and went back to the Rolls-Royce without a taste of the congratulatory champagne. He had often heard that tigers could be drugged on doped meat for the Great of the Earth, but he had never believed that it was really brought into practice. He was not, however, the man to say anything on the subject. But it may all have accounted for a small alteration in the next list of the Exalted Order already mentioned.

CHAPTER XIV

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

THE story told in this chapter was written by my father, and I found it among his papers when he died. To him I owe my inherited love of Big Game, and many were the talks we had on the subject. Fine sportsman that he was there was no subject that was nearer to his heart, and he edited the Big-Game Section of the first *Encyclopædia Britannica*. We were separated as all fathers are in a greater or less degree from all sons, by a long tale of years, by shyness, and by that great gulf the War, with all the differences in outlook that it brought. But we would both have been happy—very happy—on a big-game expedition together, but that was not to be. I am glad therefore that in this book we have been enabled to make one big-game venture side by side, and I know that in the happy hunting-grounds he is glad too.

I do not suppose that, in the whole of Scotland, there was, for a man of moderate means, a more delightful little sporting place than Clachanault, in the Island of Vhui, which, as everyone knows, is situated on the north-west coast of Ross-shire. It was only a small shooting of some 5,000 acres, lying on the slope of Ben Vhui, between the great

THE PERFECT SHOOTING

deer forest of Fladish and the sea, and why it was not included in the forest I never could make out.

Anyhow, there it was ; and a very charming place I used to find it. Tom Huntley and I had a five years' lease of it, and being both bachelors and not above roughing it a little, we used to enjoy ourselves enormously. We had a tiny lodge looking out over the Atlantic ; our keeper, Peter Mackenzie, lived in a cottage close by, and Mrs. Mackenzie, aided by a bare-legged lassie from a neighbouring croft, managed our cooking and housework. We had a first-rate little sea-trout and grilse river, fair loch fishing for brown trout, and our average bag of grouse was about 150 brace, besides an unlimited quantity of wild-fowl, woodcock, and snipe. Then, if the water was not right for fishing and we wanted to give the moor a rest, there were seals to be stalked and rock-pigeons to be shot on the coast. In short, as I have said before, for two young fellows who did not mind roughing it a little, there was no more charming place in Scotland. I must also add that had we chosen we could easily have increased our bag every year by some ten or a dozen stags. Hardly a day passed without our seeing deer from the Fladish forest on our ground, and we had a clause in our lease which gave us the right to kill deer. The then tenant of Fladish, however, (Mr. Kingsclere, the Conservative member for Marlshire), was an old friend of ours, and, in consequence, we never even dreamt of interfering with the stags. Dear old fellow ! he always reciprocated our forbearance by giving us

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

a week's stalking in the forest, and was always ready to do us any little kindness that lay in his power.

It was a great disappointment to Tom and myself when, as we were making our preparations to start for the North one summer, we heard that Mr. Kingsclere had given up Fladish, and that it had been taken by Lord Stripwell, the great and recently-ennobled brewer. Tom and I arrived at Clachanault towards the end of July, and spent a month shooting and fishing diligently without bothering our heads much about the new tenant of Fladish. We agreed that we would not interfere with the deer on our ground, though, of course, we had a perfect right to do so, as we thought it would be best to keep on good terms with our new neighbour, and, I may add, we expected, not unnaturally, that he would appreciate our forbearance as our former one had done.

Lord Stripwell and his party did not arrive till nearly the end of August (there is but little grousing on Fladish), and a week or ten days had passed without our hearing anything of him, when one day, as we were shooting the beat next our march, we descried one of his foresters watching us on the sky-line. Making him out to be Malcolm M'Leod, an old acquaintance of ours, we signalled to him to come down and have a crack. Malcolm came willingly enough; no doubt, scenting whisky from afar, as we were just beginning our lunch, and sat down and began a guttural Gaelic conversation with Peter. Lunch over, we called him up, and, after a few remarks about the weather and the sport, asked him how he liked his new master. Beyond saying that

LOOSING A TERRIER

“he wuss a fine big shentleman, and an awfu’ man to sweer when vexed,” he did not vouchsafe much information about him, except that he was no good for stalking “whatefer,” and only cared for driving. Altogether, without saying anything in particular, Mr. M’Leod gave us to understand that he did not consider his new master any improvement on his old one.

Well, time passed on, and, thanks to his lordship’s system of driving, we found more deer than ever on our ground. Still, sorely against the grain I must admit, we continued to spare them; and should probably have continued to do so to the end of the season had it not been for the following unforeseen occurrence.

One Saturday night, as Tom and I were smoking our post-prandial pipes, Peter appeared with a beautiful little fox-terrier which he had found wandering about on our moor. He was lost in admiration of the beauty of the dog, the like of which he had never seen. “And, ‘deed, shentlemen,” he added, “I think it must be one of his lordship’s from Fladish,” and sure enough on a silver collar round its neck we found the inscription, “‘Nip,’ Lady Stripwell, 802, Piccadilly.” It was too late to send the dog back that night, so we gave it a good meal, and recognizing us as friends it soon curled up on the hearth and went comfortably to sleep.

Next morning, as we were discussing the best means of sending it home, Tom said, “Happy thought! It is a loyely day, and we have nothing to do; let’s walk over to Fladish and return the

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

dog ourselves. His lordship, I suppose, will stand lunch, and we can then let him know that we have a right to kill deer on our ground, and tell him at the same time that we don't want to interfere with his sport, but that we should like to get a stag or two before we move south." I thought this a very good suggestion, and as it was only ten miles to Fladish, we started off cheerfully enough, Nip, who had taken a fancy to us, following at our heels. It was a blazing hot day, and by the time we hove in sight of the house we had both developed a most super-excellent thirst; whilst Tom expressed a not unnatural hope that his lordship had had the foresight to bring a barrel or two of his world-renowned beer to the Highlands with him.

Now Fladish Lodge was one of those unhappily designed houses where visitors in advancing to the front door have to run the gauntlet of the sitting-room windows, which is a very trying ordeal to the young and diffident, and as we marched up to the door, leading Nip in a leash, we became aware (through the open window of the dining-room) of a large and apparently jovial party of ladies and gentlemen seated round an exceedingly well-covered luncheon table. Feeling rather shy, we rang the bell—in nowise reassured by the sudden hush which greeted our appearance, and which was only broken by a masculine exclamation of "Who the deuce is this?" and by a feminine shriek of "Oh, my dog!"

After a portentously long wait, a dignified-looking butler answered our ring.

"Is Lord Stripwell at home?" I asked.

NOT AT HOME

“Not at home, sir,” replied the well-drilled domestic, without moving a muscle of his face.

I *was* flabbergasted I admit, yet, without moving a muscle of *mine*, I remarked as carelessly as I could: “Oh! when he returns give him these cards, and tell him we have brought back his dog, which our keeper found on our moor last night.”

With this we turned on our heels, and, with our noses well in the air, walked away past the open windows, outwardly calm but inwardly raging.

Needless to say, as soon as we were out of sight of the house, our rage broke forth in all its fury. “Never could we have imagined such gross incivility, downright insult, infernal brewer,” etc. etc.

At last Tom, cooling down a little, said: “Well, perhaps after all the beggar was not at home, and if his wife and guests were not civil enough to ask us in we can hardly blame him for it.”

Hardly had the words escaped his mouth when we met Colin Dewar, the head stalker. Now, Colin and we were old friends: many a crafty stalk in old days had we enjoyed, and so, dissembling our wrath, we pulled up to have a chat.

“Well, Colin, where are you off to?” I asked, after the usual greetings.

“Oh, I’m chust going up to the lodge to see his lordship apout to-morrow’s arrangements,” was the answer.

“What! Is he at home then?” I asked again.

“Oh, ay, he’s nefer peen away since he came,” answered the astonished keeper; and after a little more desultory conversation we parted.

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

“Now that settles the matter,” quoth Tom, once more in a white heat. “We’ll wait three days to see if he writes and apologizes. If he does not we’ll kill every stag that comes on our ground,” and solacing ourselves with the prospect of speedy revenge we trudged the ten weary miles home.

Two days passed, and then the following note (containing two visiting cards) arrived: “Lord Stripwell presents his compliments to Messrs. Huntley and Brown, and is much obliged to them for returning Lady Stripwell’s dog. Lord Stripwell regrets the trouble they have been put to in the matter.”

That was all! And our minds were very quickly made up. Peter was that evening summoned to a council of war, and after being treated to a glass of whisky was informed that we intended to stalk the next day. His eyes fairly blazed with delight at the news, for he had the true Highlander’s love of deer-stalking strongly rooted in him, and had been greatly disgusted with our previous forbearance. Tom and I then tossed for first chance, and he, winning, started off early next morning whilst I stayed at home and had a quiet day’s fishing. Tom returned early in the afternoon, having had a delightful stalk and killed a nice stag, which, when brought home in the evening, weighed nearly fifteen stone, and great was our joy. Now that the ice was fairly broken we determined to give up grouse shooting on the higher ground for the rest of the season, and to go in regularly for stalking, an arrangement which, I need hardly say, was much to Peter’s gratification. Two days later he and I went off together, and about

STALKING IN EARNEST

midday we spied deer almost on the edge of our ground, within a quarter of a mile of the march. It was an easy stalk to get within shot of them, but there was only one good stag among them, and, as he was lying down, we had to wait until he rose.

As we were lying with the rifle ready to hand, Peter, who was a little in front of me, shifted his glass on to the hill above us, and whispered, "I'm thinking there's Colin Dewar and a gentleman from Fladish watching us up there on the hill, a little to the left of yon big rock."

Sure enough! I easily made out Colin and another man, evidently a visitor to Fladish, who were watching us through their glasses.

"They must be wishing the deer wuss their side o' ta march," whispered Peter, in a delighted chuckle, but further conversation was cut short by an inquisitive hind, which began to stare uneasily in our direction. For nearly an hour we lay watching and being watched, until at last the stag rose and began to feed, giving me a beautiful broadside shot. There was no need for Peter's hoarse and stereotyped whisper of "Tak' time," for, getting a fair sight behind its shoulder, I rolled it over as dead as a door-nail.

Great as was my delight, it was surpassed by Peter's, who had always had a lurking suspicion that the men at Fladish looked down on him as a mere "grouse keeper," and now one of them had seen him take his gentleman up to a stag (one of theirs into the bargain) as well as—"or better than," he observed, parenthetically—they could have done themselves.

Whilst he was engaged in gralloching the beast I

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

once more turned my glass on the opposite hill. Colin and his gentleman were still watching us (the other deer had galloped off far away to their right); but, at last, they moved slowly off into the forest, turning, however, once or twice to look at us. A day or two after this, as Tom and I were smoking after dinner, Peter was announced, who, after placing the finger of perturbation in the mouth of perplexity, said in a rather hesitating tone of voice, "I wuss seeing Malcolm M'Leod from Fladish the day," and then stopped.

"Well," answered Tom, with, I fear, rather feigned carelessness, "and what did Malcolm tell you?"

"'Deed, sir, he wuss sayin' his lordship wuss fair mad when he heard of our getting the stags; and he wuss sending off to Inverness to Mr. Nares, the factor, to know if you had the right to kill deer on Clachanault."

"Well, he may send till he's black in the face, for we have the right in our lease," Tom answered, and Peter withdrew, evidently much relieved in his mind.

Lord Stripwell, however, was a man of resource. Finding he was unable by legal means to prevent our killing deer on our own ground, he hit on a plan which proved nearly as effectual. Our ground only marched with his for about two miles, and in the centre of the march he caused a small iron hut to be erected, about fifty yards on his side of the boundary. In this he stationed a luckless watcher, with instructions to keep continually patrolling the march, and occasionally to fire off a gun or wave a red "driving flag" if he saw deer.

THE DAWN START

I am sorry to say this ingenious plan proved, as far as his lordship was concerned, a most successful one. It was too bad ; but there was nothing for us but to grin and bear it, and grin we most certainly did—with rage ; but, as the season wore on and the stags began to move about more, a few deer occasionally slipped on to our ground during the night ; and we managed to kill a couple of small beasts, which were some solace.

We soon found out that the only chance of ever seeing deer was in the early morning, and one day, towards the beginning of October, Peter and I started for the hill at sunrise, having arranged overnight to try a certain corrie which had not been disturbed for some time, and the wind being fair we made our way straight to it. It was a lovely autumn morning ; the mists were still clinging in scattered wreaths to the summit of Ben Vhui ; but here, on the lower slopes, though the sun shone bright and hot, the dew was sparkling on every blade of grass and twig of heather, and the air was deliciously keen and cool. The only living thing astir so early, besides ourselves, was a school of gulls, which dipped and rose and screamed over the stretch of brown, shining sand where our little river flowed lazily to lose itself in the blue Atlantic, which then was lying as calm and smooth as an inland loch.

We had reached the rock from which we meant to spy, and were taking our glasses out of our cases, when we both became aware of a solitary stag lying on a little knoll right in the middle of the corrie. With the naked eye we could make out that he was

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an exceptionally fine beast ; but we were not prepared for the enormous size he seemed when we looked at him through our glasses, and in addition we made out that he carried a magnificent royal head. Now, as a rule, the deer in Vhui (as in all the island forests) were small, with poor heads (anything over sixteen stone was considered very good) ; but like every other deer forest in Scotland, it possessed a traditionary big stag, which was locally spoken of as "the big stag of Ben Vhui." This monster was generally supposed to haunt the very summit of the Ben ; but it was heard of in every part of the island. As it was rarely, if ever, seen, and never fired at, we had come to look on the story as the mythical offspring of the fertile imagination of some long-forgotten seer, which had originated and been kept alive through generations by bad whisky acting on natural superstition. Needless to say, however, the inhabitants of Vhui firmly believed in the existence of the beast ; and, as I put my glass back in its case, Peter, for once forgetting his manners, gripped me by the shoulder, and huskily whispered, " Man, it's the big stag of Ben Vhui himself ! " And really I believed that it was so.

To get within shot of the beast was an easy matter ; wind and ground both suited, and, after making a slight detour, in less than half an hour we were within 200 yards of where he lay. I had marked a rock half as near again as the place from which I meant to take my shot, and, leaving Peter behind—much to his disgust—I crawled quietly to it, getting wet through from the dew in the process before I lay

TWO TRIUMPHANT STALKERS

behind it with beating heart, waiting for the stag to rise. He was barely 100 yards off, and would have made a most glorious picture if painted as he lay on a slope of green moss, chewing the cud, and occasionally lazily turning his head to scratch his great flank with one magnificent antler, on which I could count seven points. At last, after about twenty minutes—during which I lay with my teeth chattering from cold and excitement—he swallowed his cud, yawned (as I am a sinner!) and rising slowly to his feet stretched his great limbs magnificently. Poor fellow, it was his last voluntary act. At the same moment my rifle rang out, and the great beast, making a wild plunge forward, galloped fifty yards, to fall stone dead with a bullet through his heart.

To describe my delight and Peter's would be impossible. We slapped one another on the back, laughed, talked both at once, and could scarcely leave off admiring my victim in order to turn him round and gralloch him. Even when we had finished the last rites, and were starting for home, I had almost to drag Peter away. He kept on ejaculating, “The big stag of Ben Vhui—twenty stone” (he was actually twenty-one) “and thirteen points! There wuss nefer such a stag killed in Scotland before,” and so on, finally concluding with the assertion that “his lordship at Fladish will be fair mad at this.”

Once at home (we were back there before Tom was out of bed) we lost no time in despatching the pony to bring home the stag, and it was with a light heart that I sat down to breakfast, the while recounting my adventures to Tom, who, good fellow that

THE BIG STAG OF BEN VHUI

he was, was just as pleased as if he had killed the beast himself.

When the “mighty dead” was brought in there was renewed excitement and admiration ; and it was well on to midday ere the work of skinning and cutting up was begun. Tom then started off to the river to try for a last fish ; whilst I, who felt rather tired, agreed to follow later, and sat down in an easy-chair for a quiet pipe over a week-old copy of the *Field*, which had arrived the day before. After reading for about twenty minutes, I was beginning to feel rather sleepy, when my attention was suddenly attracted by seeing the name of Vhui, in a small paragraph at the foot of a column. The paragraph was headed “Hungarian Deer for the Highlands,” and ran as follows :

We understand, from our Inverness correspondent, that—with a view to introduce fresh blood, and thereby improve the heads of the deer in the Island of Vhui—Lord Stripwell (the tenant of Fladish Forest) has, at great expense, procured two magnificent stags from the herd at Eberwald, the Carinthian seat of his friend, Baron Bock. One of the stags unfortunately died *en route* ; but the other, a remarkably fine animal, arrived safely at Fladish on Monday ; and, after being duly marked with a small cross in the ear, was safely transferred to the forest. Great credit is due to Lord Stripwell for this spirited attempt to improve the breed of deer in the island, for these, in late years, have shown a marked depreciation, both as regards their weight and heads, and we trust that the experiment will prove a success.

I read the paragraph through without attaching any particular importance to it ; and I was turning

A PRESS BATTLE

over the page, when, suddenly, a horrid suspicion flashed, lightning-like, across my brain. Flinging down the paper, I sprang from my seat and flew round to the outhouse, where Peter and Murdoch (our gillie), red to their very shoulders, were cutting up the huge beast. They had already removed the head, which had been placed on a bench and covered with a clean cloth. I tore this off like a madman ; and—yes ! no ! yes ! oh, horror ! there, in the very middle of the right ear, almost concealed by the thick hair, was a neat little cross-cut, only just healed !

Some of my readers may, perhaps, remember the controversy which raged in the columns of the sporting, and in some cases of the daily, press during the early part of the winter of 18—. It arose out of a most ample apology which I sent to Lord Stripwell, whose answer, however, was of a nature which obliged me to inform his lordship that any further correspondence between us must be carried on by the medium of our solicitors. This, these gentlemen continued to do for some time ; no doubt with profit to themselves, but without affording any satisfaction to their principals. Then the matter was transferred to the newspapers ; where, after providing matter for more than one leading article, it furnished a splendid *causa teterrima belli* to a number of ardent, and for the most part anonymous, correspondents ; “Fair Play,” “An Old Stalker,” and many others, deeming me unworthy of the name of sportsman ; whilst “One who has fired 50,000 times at a barn-door,” “Civis Romanus,” and a host of other gentle-

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men (to whom I now tender my warmest thanks) were equally strong in their condemnation of his lordship. I think, however, the unkindest cut of all was my receiving a letter of sympathy from "The Highland and Islands Association for the Abolition of all Sporting Rights, and Deer Forests in particular."

The upshot of it all was that Lord Stripwell (determined no longer to remain in a place where his neighbours treated him in so monstrous a manner) shook the dust of Fladish from off his feet and withdrew to the mainland. Mr. Kingsclere is once more the tenant of Fladish ; and the big stag of Ben Vhui still roams in his native fastnesses, but, somehow or another, I don't think he will ever fall to my rifle.

CHAPTER XV

MUSIA

Lord D'ABERNON described John Sargent in his *Portraits and Appreciations* as "a man who achieved what so few achieve—the fullest development of special powers within a given sphere." Is it bathetic to use those same words of Musia? Not, at any rate, to me; for though it may seem a far cry from the most sought after portrait painter since Lawrence to a humble gun-bearer in Uganda, yet the comparison has more than a measure of justice. Both along the lines of their own specialization advanced to somewhere reasonably close to perfection, neither had the desire, nor possibly the ability, to achieve success in any sphere other than their own, and both were men of simple, and, in the best sense of the term, of humble character.

Blood, we are brought up to believe, will tell. It has certainly told in the case of Musia. His father was one of the best Generals of the Baganda, the tribe inhabiting the southern part of what is now the Uganda Protectorate; a tribe far more endowed with soldierly qualities and the brains to profit by them, than most Central African races. Musia and his brother were the children of a favourite spouse, and their father, who had wived freely, was really fond of this particular family; but with the coming

MUSIA

of Christianity as the official religion of the Protectorate, it became necessary for him to become officially monogamous. Musia's mother was put away, and though his father still took an interest in the boy, he had, of course, ceased to exist as far as his official step-brothers and step-sisters were concerned. I will not call them legitimate, as it would suggest Musia was born to a baton sinister ; nothing could be further from the case ; he was born under the ordinary social arrangements of his own world. So at the age of about fourteen, his father looked round to find him a job, to settle his son in life, in the same sort of way that Bute Crawley became rector of Queens Crawley. He had to be provided for. Service in a good European household seemed indicated ; well trained by the right sort of *bwana* he would never lack for employment. The father's eye fell on Roy Salmon, then a young coffee planter in Toro, to-day a game warden in charge of part of the Uganda Government's elephant control arrangements, and one of the greatest elephant shots of all time. Musia was handed over to him body and soul, and from that moment, Musia set up Samaki (for that is his native name) as his own particular idol.

First of all he was tried in the house. Musia tried very hard, pathetically hard, but he was really very little use. He could never master the intricacies of knives and forks—he could never understand the screws that operated the petrol lamp—he generally managed to break anything he was given to clean. For Musia, apart from his own calling, is a stupid man. Then he was tried in the garden with the

THE PERFECT GUN-BEARER

same results. Then on the plantation. Finally, Samaki had to tell his father that though he liked the boy, he could hardly be expected to keep him. "Try him as a gun-bearer," was the reply. "He's very interested in hunting." . And that is how Musia found his vocation.

Now a really good gun-bearer need not be a superlatively clever man, indeed if he is superlatively clever he will probably not have the makings of a good gun-bearer. He must be personally devoted, brave as a lion, obedient, tireless, and possessed of a thorough working knowledge of hunting. Musia had all these qualifications in full measure, and he was being trained by one of the great natural hunters of our generation. But he was being trained too in a hard school. Should Samaki find when he was being charged by an elephant that his gun-bearer was watching the oncoming tornado and not his master (and after all most of us would venture just a glance at it !) he would wait till the encounter was over and then see that the offender was given such a lesson as will ensure that he never, never erred again !

Very soon it became clear that Musia had learned the first essentials of his trade, which is that though lions, elephants, buffalo and rhino charge you in a phalanx, your only duty is to be standing by your *bwana*, ready to hand him another loaded rifle. He was quite without fear, and he loved a hunt. There seemed to be long years of joyful life in front of him, for Samaki was still young, and his plantation flourished.

Then came the War. It upset Musia's little world

MUSIA

in the same way that it upset and ended so many other worlds of greater and lesser degree. Samaki went off to join the K.A.R. and Musia went, too. He knew nothing of the deaths of Austrian Archdukes, of Nicky's messages to Willy, of top-hatted Presidents sending telegrams to King George; indeed it was only in the haziest of ways that he knew that it was for King George that he was going to fight. *His* idea was he would become Samaki's orderly.

It was the habit in the K.A.R. not to complete definitely a recruit's enlistment, till he had had his first glimpse of army life. This regulation was a God-send to Musia. He arrived, just as Private Mucklewame was doing in far-distant Wishaw, imbued with the idea that he and his *bwana* were about to set forth on a glorified man-hunt, which would be the best safari of all.

He was duly fallen in and given his first lesson in marking time. At the end of half an hour he was still standing there marking time, raising one leg in all solemnity as he put down the other. It seemed to him to be passing strange. He paused awhile, and thinking the information might be of value, pointed out to his instructor that they never behaved like this when they went shooting elephants. He was told to keep silence, and the parade continued. Musia is a very polite man, and he said nothing. He fell in again and marked time for an hour more. But that evening he came to Samaki and said such foolishness was not to be borne—he returned to Toro for the rest of the War. Years after a very August Personage, to whom Musia was temporarily

THE CONGOLESE BELLE

acting as gun-bearer, was told this story, and it amused him not a little. Whenever there was a tiresome pause in the proceedings, he would ask his gun-bearer whether this did not remind him of the army !

So Musia went home ; from time to time news came filtering through that Samaki was all right, and then came the peace. For the next year or two they hunted happily together, and then there began the epoch that for Musia was the most glorious of all. Coffee ceased to be a paying concern, and Samaki took to elephant shooting for a living ; first semi-professionally, and subsequently as a Member of the Elephant Control Staff. Now, instead of their couple of elephants or so a year they were shooting them in scores, almost in hundreds. Musia wanted nothing better than this. He was become the first of many gun-bearers. There would be two double barrels and a magazine rifle out ; their safaris were definitely imposing.

Yet he remained utterly humble for he still thought of his abilities in terms of petrol lamps. He was as willing, as contented and as unspoilt as he had been ten years before. He had become, too, in a small way, a man of substance. He was thrifty and he had saved, and so he took to himself a wife, a little Congolese beauty from over the border, with crimped hair, and big round lustrous eyes. She was a little syren. She twisted herself round and round the susceptible heart of Musia. Nothing was too good for her ; he lavished upon her his entire savings. He hired labour and built her a hut ; he furnished it with everything that could gladden the heart of a crimp-haired Congo-

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lese. For once he was glad when a safari ended and he could get back to his hut. Delilah had indeed shorn the locks of Samson. Then one day they came back from a hunt, and the hut was empty. Delilah had bolted back across the border to her own people, taking all Musia's possessions with her. He gave her up without a struggle. She was a Belgian subject. The steps necessary to get back his goods, let alone his wife, were beyond his simple comprehension. He gave her up with a shrug, and got out the cleaning rod of the big rifle. Poor Musia !

One more essay he made in marriage. The cast-off wife of a chief she was, and Musia took her in the hopes of a *toto*. To be childless is something of a reproach to the African, and Musia hoped to find a remedy here. But whatever blessings were shed on the match by Aphrodite, the Goddess Lucina did not turn her face to them, and that wife too faded away. Since that date Musia has remained a bachelor.

In the worship at the shrine of his own particular god, Musia has had some agonizing moments. Once not so very long after he had entered Samaki's service, they were resting in the heat of the noontide beneath a tree. Samaki was reading a book ; Musia, no doubt, pursuing the greater and ever greater elephants of his imagination. As Samaki read he chanced to look up, and there he saw Musia watching him, frozen with horror, and as he looked at Musia there swam into his ken the head of a venomous little snake, which had crawled across his recumbent body and was now wriggling over the open page of his

R E V E N G E

book. Their eyes met. The snake watched him with surprised interest. "If he strikes, he'll get me in the face," thought Samaki, "and then all chance of applying a tourniquet is gone." The snake continued to gaze at Samaki. Time and eternity stood still. It lifted back its head slightly. It was going to strike! And then it gave a wriggle and made off. In a flash Musia sprang to life—his stick raised for a blow; but Samaki, who felt for once that he owed a snake something, bade him be still. It does indeed require presence of mind and self-control to see your own particular god staring death in the face, and to remember not to move a hair.

Years after, when the War was over, there was another incident, which for quite different reasons three people are not likely to forget. It was a cold day, and one of the second gun-bearers was carrying a hammer-gun. His fingers were numbed, and as he was uncocking it, he let it off about a yard behind Samaki's ear. Stunned by the explosion, he dropped like a stone. When he came to a minute later, Musia was standing over the delinquent like a tiger over its prey, telling him that he'd killed his *bwana* and now he was going to make him pay for it. In quite what currency Musia intended to claim his vengeance will never be known, as Samaki was able to intervene, and Musia's delight put all thoughts of punishment from his mind.

But the third and worst occasion of all happened on a day which was at any time heavy with the hand of fate as far as Musia was concerned—the day before Samaki was going home to England on leave. He

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had been sent on ahead with the motor-bicycle to wait for Samaki at an adjacent spot on the road. He went off in one direction solemnly pushing the machine, but with about as much genuine gusto as the Moderator of the Church of Scotland would handle a stoop of Holy Water. Samaki departed in the other with the blythe step of one who is casting something of the dust of Africa from his footgear with every pace. Six hours later Musia, who had heard a certain amount of firing, was horrified to see his *bwana*, battered and bleeding, come tottering back to the road, supported by a local tracker. Samaki took a swig at his water-bottle and lay down while the tracker told the story to Musia.

They had wounded a big single tusker, and followed him into high elephant grass, higher than their heads by far. Till one has been through this experience oneself, it is absolutely impossible to visualize the feeling of utter helplessness that it engenders—even if you are an elephant hunter with very long experience. This particular elephant meant business and he suddenly appeared out of the grass about three yards away. Samaki put a shot almost head on through his eye hoping it would carry on and reach the brain. The next thing that happened was that a trunk came falling down out of the sky and seized him.

The elephant then proceeded to swing Samaki gently to and fro, rather as if he were conducting some unknown elephantine orchestra, to beat a place down in the grass wherein to finish off his victim. This done, he threw him between his legs and knelt

A TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE

on him. Fortunately, Samaki was able to wriggle forward and get under his belly, but every time that he tried to exit, the elephant kicked him back. In the meantime, his gun-bearer, a very plucky boy, had come up, and thinking to approach where there was least danger, he advanced on the side where there was no tusk, to try and get hold of Samaki's rifle. Unfortunately that was the side where there *was* an eye, and before he could take the rifle the elephant had brought his trunk crashing down on to the boy's skull and killed him. This may sound far-fetched, but it is nevertheless true.

Then the trunk came slowly round between the front legs again and began feeling for his victim. It was at this juncture that Samaki very nearly lost his head, and gave way to the almost irresistible impulse to beat at it. With a great effort he refrained, and as he cowered back towards the hind legs, a native tracker, who was with them, ran up and seized the rifle. He had never previously fired one, and he used it from the hip, emptying the magazine into the side of the elephant. This sent the beast off, but, before doing so, he got hold of Samaki, seized him up, twisted his head round in his trunk, and then threw him violently into the bushes. The elephant was found dead a hundred yards farther on the next day.

That was the state in which Musia found Samaki. One wrist broken and several ribs, cut and bruised all over, and the whole of his internal mechanism in a jumble. Poor Musia! Between them they started up the motor-bike, and Samaki got on to it

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and drove slowly off on an elliptical course to the nearest succour twenty miles away. And Musia ran desperately, despairingly, behind. Nine months later Samaki came back from leave—a leave which was chiefly spent in hospital—and the old life began again ; and Musia, like a dog which has got over his quarantine, was welcoming back his master.

Musia has had many distinguished patrons, for Samaki is a superb show-man and much in demand as such. He was with the King, when he was Prince of Wales, as gun-bearer, he was with Lord Athlone and Princess Alice, and he accompanied the Duke and Duchess of York's safari. But he remains in spite of it all quite unspoilt. He had, of course, only a vague idea of the importance of his patrons, but he knew they were Definite Somebodies, for did not Governors (the highest star in his social firmament up to that date) run to their behest ? He was aware, too, of the extraordinary stir that the elephant which charged the Prince of Wales caused. I will call His Majesty by the title he then had, as that was how Musia knew him. He knew nothing of the whys and wherefores, but he realized that as Pete Pearson (who was in charge) and Samaki advanced with the Prince of Wales into the high elephant grass, that even such old and cool hands as those two were a trifle more on their toes than usual. After all, there is only one Heir to the Throne ! Musia kept close to the Prince with his second rifle ; he knew his job and there was no need to give him any special instructions. He did not know that it had been arranged that if there was a charge, Samaki

WITH THE PRINCE

was to deal with the elephant, and Pete Pearson was to see to the personal safety of his principal responsibility. When the charge came at very close quarters, Samaki had the elephant covered and fired twice, while Pete Pearson pushed the Prince of Wales as hard as he could into a bush. The situation was a new one to Musia, but he knew his place. He rushed into the bush to give the Prince of Wales a second rifle should it be needed. It was not, for those few seconds saw the end of that elephant, and the nearest approach to violent death that any Heir to the Throne can have had since the Black Prince.

When at the end of the safari, all the servants were lined up so that the Prince of Wales could say good-bye to them, Musia took his humble place among them. He had never asked for, or expected, praise in his life, and he expected nothing now. The Prince thought otherwise. "I'm not going to say good-bye to Musia here," he said. "Musia's coming back with us in the car to Entebbe to stay at Government House." And so it was. Off he went, alone of all the servants, in the Prince of Wales's car. Musia has never forgotten that, and he never will.

My own connection with Musia came on a shooting holiday in Uganda, when Samaki lent him to me. That is a great honour. The Tenth, as we know, don't dance, and Musia is not lent. Musia took me in charge. I was the new friend, I used to flatter myself that he became really quite interested in me. He would help to put up my bed and pitch my tent, matters that do not usually swim into the ken of a gun-bearer. I was the new toy. Together we hunted

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every shape and sort of animal, and Musia always remained patient, willing, and above all utterly courageous under every sort of difficulty. Though a perfect gun-bearer, he was not a really good hunter—he was too slow-minded for that. His main idea was “there’s the quarry, let’s go and blast a hole in it,”—that is except with elephants, which from long experience he understood from A to Z. On one occasion we had to follow a wounded lion into some thick bush. Personally I did not enjoy it enormously. One could not turn tail, however, when Musia breasted the high grass as if he was looking for a spot to picnic in. It would have required far more courage than following a wounded dragon into the uttermost inferno. We had worked from dawn to dusk for four days for that lion. And to the *bwana*’s dawn to dusk day add another two hours at each end for the gun-bearer’s. Eventually we found the lion dead, and Musia’s delight knew no bounds, for he wanted it for me. My pleasure I need not say was coupled with relief.

Then there was the occasion when we were bushed. Our Karamajong guide was told to wait while we stalked (and lost) some eland. He was never seen again. For all I know he is squatting there still. We lost the way, and when finally we struck the road it was long after dark. Mournfully we footed the nine miles back to camp, Musia slightly in advance. It was black as the pit. Suddenly Musia began to unload. Thinking he had seen an unexpected but welcome car in waiting, I gave a loud cheer to which he responded with a hiss of warning. I then realized

HAPPINESS AND A BICYCLE

that we were in the middle of a herd of elephants, and that Musia was replacing the soft-nosed bullets with solid! We retreated backwards, as in the presence of Royalty, making ourselves as scarce as we could, but I am sure that Musia left them with reluctance. He knew of only one thing better than an elephant, and that was a dead elephant. When at last Samaki picked us up in his car about midnight, poor Musia tumbled into the back seat without a word, and was no more seen till the next day. He felt he had let me down (which he hadn't). His face was blackened. His brown dog's eyes were more pathetic than ever.

The time came for me to say good-bye to him. I had arranged to give him a bicycle as a farewell present. He had always wanted a bicycle. Years before, Samaki had given him the money to buy one as a parting present before going on leave. Musia's brother, arriving shortly afterwards, persuaded him that it would be far better to invest the cash in his fish business. That would be An Income. A bicycle! What was that? It would be worn out in a couple of years, years that are as nothing to a prosperous fish business. Besides, the other servants would infallibly borrow it. Musia, as I have already indicated, is a child in these matters. And the money went west. Now that a bicycle materialized at long last, he was ecstatic. He jumped up and down. He went off to tell Samaki. He had reached the sum total of human felicity. Parting from a European is merely a social formula—there is the air mail, even the long-distance telephone.

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There is that little reunion in the club on the shady side of Pall Mall, that bottle that we have so often split in anticipation in bush or jungle. To the African, with the African, the sense of finality is far more pressing—and I am no less sentimental than any other Briton. As I watched the little figure in his torn khaki uniform giving a final tug at the straps of my valise, his face and manner recalling so strongly a prize-winner in a good class of gun dogs, I was assailed more strongly than ever I had been before with the feeling of the inferiority of many of the standards of my own world.

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